

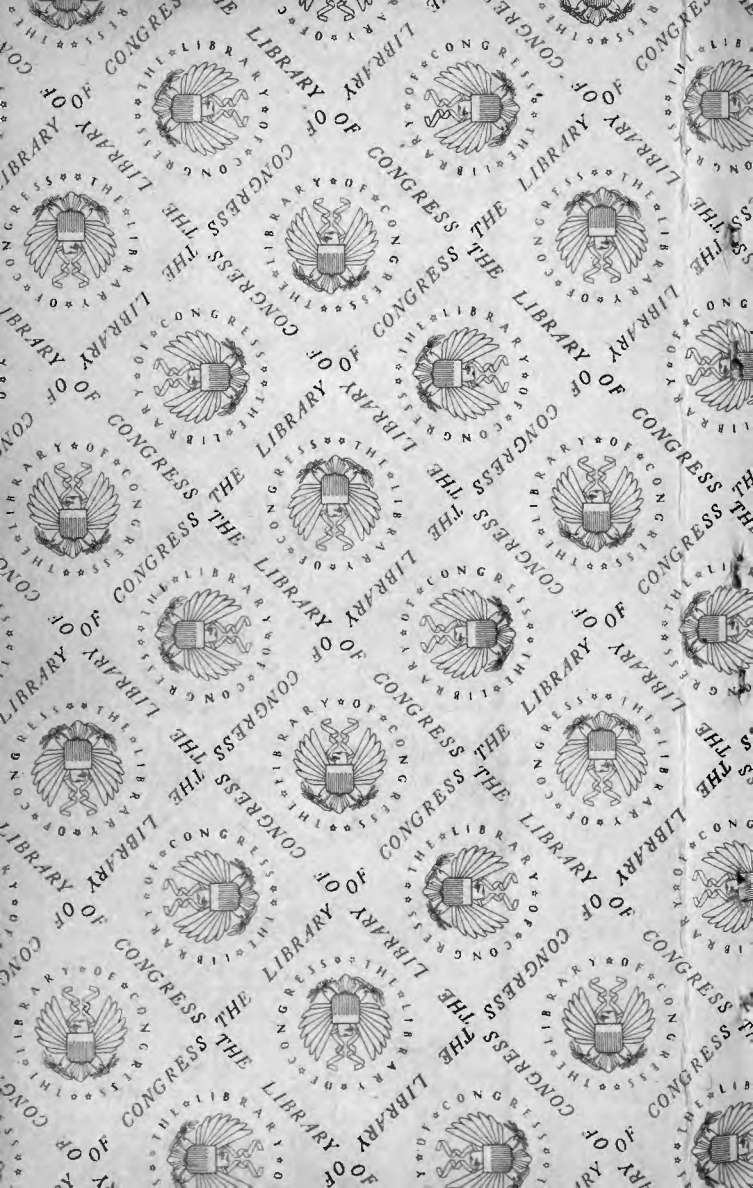
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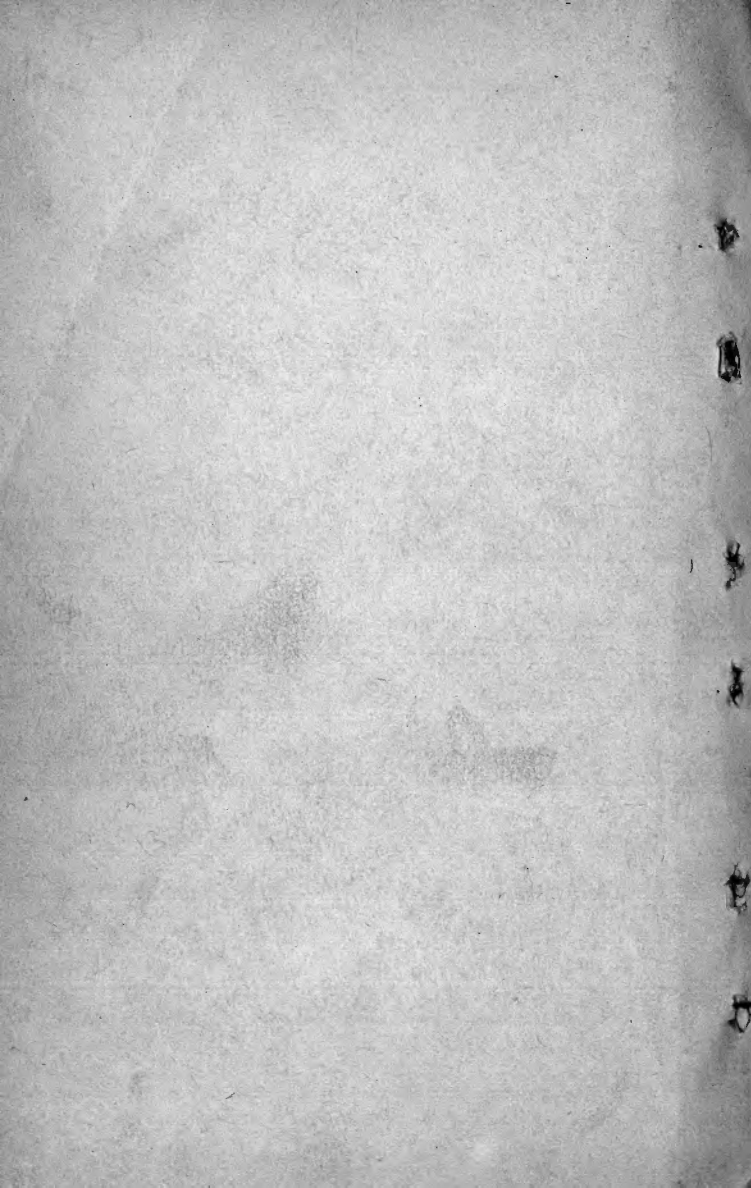
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APPLETONS' NEW HANDY-VOLUME SERIES. 4.5-8

STRANGE STORIES.

(*CONTES FANTASTIQUES.*)

✓
FROM THE FRENCH OF
ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN.
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STRANGE STORIES.

THE MYSTERIOUS SKETCH.

I.

OPPOSITE Saint Sebalt Chapel, in Nuremberg, at the corner of Trabaus Street, there is a little tavern ; it is narrow and high, the windows—if now as then—are covered with a heavy coat of dust, and the sharp gable-end is surmounted by the Virgin in plaster. It was there that I passed the most joyless days of my life.

I had gone to Nuremberg to study the German masters ; but, being poorly supplied with money, I was compelled to paint portraits—and what portraits ! Fat old women with their cats on their laps, big-wigged aldermen, portly burgo-masters in their three-cornered hats, the whole illuminated with ochre and vermilion by the handful.

From portraits I descended to sketches, and from sketches to silhouettes.

Nothing makes life a greater burden than to have your landlord, with his weazen face, his shrill voice, and impudent air, come to you every day and assail your sensibilities with,

“Well, sir, well! Am I ever to see the color of your money again? Do you know how much your little bill amounts to now? No idea, probably—don’t want to have! My fine gentleman eats, drinks, and sleeps calmly as if all the world were his own. Your bill amounts to two hundred florins, sir. A mere bagatelle, I know, sir; but I could make good use of it just now, if I had it.”

He who has not been forced to listen to the chanting of a gamut of this construction can have no idea of its effect on the human mind. Love of art, imagination, enthusiasm for the beautiful, everything poetic and ennobling in the realms of thought, is scattered to the winds by a harangue of the sort. You become awkward, timid, limp; you lose all your feeling of personal dignity, and seek to escape the gaze of your fellows.

One night, being, as was often the case, without a kreutzer and menaced with imprisonment by the worthy Rap, I resolved to bankrupt him by cutting my throat. While I sat opposite the window occupied with this agreeable thought, my mind wandered off into innumerable philosophic reflections, more or less edifying.

“What is man?” I asked myself. “An om-

nivorous animal ; his jaws, provided with canines, incisors, and molars, sufficiently prove it. The canines are made to tear, the incisors to cut, and the molars to crush such animal and vegetable substances as constitute his food. But when he has nothing to masticate, the creature man is a veritable superplenitude in nature, a fifth wheel to the coach."

Such were my reflections. I did not dare to touch my razor for fear that the force of my logic would inspire me with the courage to make an end of it. After having argued for some time in this manner, I blew out my candle and postponed the continuation till the next day.

This abominable Rap had completely brutalized me. In my art nothing but silhouettes ; and yet my uppermost desire was to have the money necessary to rid myself of his odious importunities. But that night a singular change came over my mental condition. I awoke about one o'clock, lighted my lamp, and, enveloping myself in my well-worn dressing-gown, I rapidly threw upon paper a sketch *à la flamande*—something strange and weird, that was totally unlike my ordinary conceptions.

Imagine a somber court-yard, inclosed by high, dilapidated walls, which are provided with hooks seven or eight feet from the ground. One readily sees that it represents a butcher's yard.

At the left there is a sort of lattice partition,

through which you see the carcass of an ox suspended by pulleys on a heavy framework. Sluggish streams of blood flow over the flagstones toward a gutter already well filled with all sorts of débris.

At the farther side of the inclosure there is a shed ; under the shed a pile of wood ; on the wood a ladder, a few bundles of straw, some coils of rope, a chicken-coop, and an old, unused rabbit-cage.

How came these details to present themselves to my imagination ? I know not. I had no analogous reminiscence, and nevertheless every stroke of the pencil had the appearance of contributing its share toward the representing of a reality. Nothing was wanting to give the sketch the semblance of truth.

But at the right there was a corner that remained unfilled. I was at a loss to know what to put there. At that point it seemed to me that something moved. All at once I saw a foot, or rather the sole of a foot. Despite this improbable position, I followed the inspiration without pausing to consider. This foot was attached to a leg, and on the leg, the muscles of which seemed to be vigorously contracted, there soon floated the tattered skirt of a dress. In short, an old woman, wan and disheveled, appeared, stretched out beside an old well, struggling to free herself from the grasp of a hand that held fast to her throat.

It was a murder scene that I was sketching ! Horror-stricken, I let the pencil fall from my hand.

The woman, in this perilous situation, her features distorted with terror, her hands grasping the arm of the murderer, made me tremble with fear. I could not look at her. But the man—he to whom the arm belonged—I could not see him. It was impossible for me to finish the sketch.

“I am tired,” said I to myself, my forehead dripping with perspiration ; “I have only this figure to finish—I will do it to-morrow. Then it will be easy enough.”

With this I returned to bed. In a little while I was sound asleep.

The next morning I arose at an unusually early hour. I had barely got ready to resume work on my nocturnal sketch when there came a gentle rap at my door.

“Come in.”

The door opened. An elderly man, tall and lean, and neatly dressed in black, appeared on my threshold. His mien, with his small, deep-set eyes, and his big, hooked nose, surmounted by a high, bony forehead, was dignified and stern. He saluted me with ceremonious gravity.

“M. Christian Venius, the painter ?” said he.

“At your service, sir.”

He bowed again, saying :

“The Baron Frederick von Spreckdal.”

The appearance of the rich dilettante Von Spreckdal, judge of the criminal court, in my garret, very nearly robbed me of my self-possession. I involuntarily cast a furtive glance at my old worm-eaten furniture, my torn wall-paper, and soiled floor. I felt humiliated by the dilapidated condition of the surroundings in which my distinguished visitor found me; but the Baron seemed to take no notice of these details. He seated himself before my table, and resumed.

“Master Venius,” said he, “I come—”

But at this moment his eyes fell upon the unfinished sketch; he stopped in the middle of the sentence. I was seated on the side of my bed. The sudden attention this august personage gave to one of my productions made my heart beat with an indefinable apprehension.

He looked at it intently for a minute or two; then turning toward me, he asked, in a very earnest tone :

“Are you the author of this sketch, sir?”

“I am.”

“The price of it?”

“I never sell my sketches. It is the first step toward a painting.”

“Ah!” said he, as he picked up the paper with the ends of his long yellow fingers.

He took a lens out of his waistcoat pocket, and set to studying the sketch in detail.

The sun at this hour shone obliquely into my

garret. Von Spreckdal was silent. The aquiline of his big, thin nose seemed to me to have suddenly increased ; his heavy brows contracted, and his long, pointed chin had taken a turn upward, making a thousand little wrinkles in his thin, colorless cheeks. The silence was so profound that I could distinctly hear the buzzing of an unfortunate fly that struggled to escape from the toils of a spider's web.

"The dimensions of the picture you propose to paint, Master Venius?" said he, without looking up.

"Three feet by four."

"The price?"

"Fifty ducats."

The Baron von Spreckdal laid the sketch down on the table, and drew from his pocket a long green-silk purse.

"Fifty ducats," said he, slipping the rings of his purse—"fifty ducats! There they are."

I could hardly believe my eyes.

The Baron rose, bade me good morning, and descended the stairs, making his heavy ivory-headed cane heard on each step as he went down. Then, recovering from my stupor, it occurred to me that I had not thanked him, whereupon I plunged down my five flights almost as fast as gravitation would take me; but, arrived at the lower door, I looked for my generous patron in vain. He was nowhere to be seen.

“Humph!” said I to myself; “this is very strange!” And I hastened back to my garret.

II.

THE unexpected visit from the munificent Von Spreckdal quite bewildered me—I was ecstatic. “Yesterday,” said I to myself, as I contemplated the pile of ducats shining in the sun—“Yesterday I sinfully considered the advisability of cutting my throat, and all for the want of a few miserable florins. How fortunate that I did not open my razor! If ever I am again tempted to end this existence, I will profit by experience and put it off till the morrow.”

After making these wholesome reflections, I sat down to finish my sketch. A few strokes of the pencil was all it required. But these few strokes I found it impossible to make: I had lost the thread of my inspiration. Cudgel my brain as I would, I could get nothing from it that harmonized any better with the rest of the sketch than a figure of Raphael would with the frequenters of one of Teniers’s pot-houses.

While I was thus absorbed, I was suddenly interrupted by Rap, who, as he was in the habit of doing, entered my room without rapping. As his astonished eyes fell upon my pile of ducats, he

cried out in a tone that enraged me beyond all control :

“ So, so, Mr. Painter, I catch you, do I ? Perhaps you’ll tell me now you have no money ! ”

As he spoke he came forward with his fingers crooked, as though about to seize something, and with a certain nervous agitation that the sight of gold so often produces in the avaricious.

For a moment I was stupefied ; but the recollection of the indignities I had been compelled to submit to from the fellow, his greedy look, and his insulting smile were more than sufficient to arouse me. I sprang toward him, seized him by the shoulders, and, quick as thought, put him out of the room, slamming the door in his vulgar face.

But no sooner was he outside the room than the old curmudgeon began to cry out, at the top of his voice :

“ My money ! pay me my money, you thief ! Give me my money ! ”

My neighbors came out of their rooms, and added to the confusion by shouting out : “ What’s the matter ? Who’s a thief ? What’s all this ? ”

Before the worthy Rap could satisfy any of these inquiries, I flung my door open, and by a well-directed kick sent him heels over head down the first flight of stairs.

“ That’s what’s the matter ! ” I cried, and returned to my den, bolting the door securely,

while my neighbors made the house resound with loud peals of laughter.

I was well satisfied with myself; I felt truly triumphant. The episode had put new life into me. I returned to my sketch, and had just finished it quite to my satisfaction, when my attention was arrested by an unusual noise. It reminded me of the striking of the butts of muskets on the pavement. I looked out of the window, and saw three gendarmes in full uniform, leaning on their carbines and standing directly before the street-door.

"The devil!" said I to myself, not a little terrified; "have I, perhaps, broken some of the fellow's bones?"

And now see the inconsistency of the human mind: I, who yesterday cared not a button—as I thought—whether I lived or not, to-day trembled in every nerve at the thought that I had, perchance, killed my landlord, and should be hanged for it.

The stairway became the scene of confused and ominous sounds—the steps of feet incased in heavy boots, the clanking of arms, and tones of voices which at that moment struck me as being of bass the basest.

Suddenly some one tried my door. It was fastened, which seemed to give rise to a general clamor. But soon a voice was heard above the others; it cried out:

“Open, in the name of the law !”

I arose, to find that my knees had suddenly become very weak.

“Open the door !” the voice repeated.

It occurred to me that I might escape over the roof ; but I had hardly thrust my head out of the window when I was seized with a sort of vertigo, and quickly withdrew it. I had taken in at a glance the windows below me, with their shining panes, their flower-pots, their bird-cages, and their gratings ; and, still lower, the balcony ; lower still, the street-lamp ; then the sign of the “Red Cask” ; and, finally, the three shining bayonets that only awaited my fall to spit me as they would a piece of cheese on a toasting-fork. On the roof of the house across the street there was a big cat hiding behind a chimney, and watching a little band of sparrows that were engaged in settling their differences in the gutter.

One can not imagine with what clearness and rapidity the human eye takes in a situation with all its minutest details when the visual powers are stimulated by fear.

At the third summons, “Open the door, or we shall force it !” seeing that escape was impossible, I slipped back the bolt.

In an instant a stalwart fellow seized me by the collar, and a little, pompous official, whose breath was offensively odorous of alcohol, announced :

“Sir, you are my prisoner !”

He wore a bottle-green, single-breasted coat, buttoned to the chin, and a high hat patterned after a stove-pipe. He had heavy side-whiskers, rings on all his fingers, and was called Passauf.*

He was the chief of police.

Five more bullet-headed minions of the law waited for me on the stairs.

“What do you want of me ?” I asked Passauf.

“Down stairs !” he cried, as he made a sign to his underlings who had me by the collar to drag me in that direction.

While his order was being obeyed, he, with the assistance of the others, hastily searched my room, turning everything topsy-turvy and inside out.

I descended the stairs supported on each side like one in the last stage of consumption.

They thrust me into a cab between two brawny fellows, armed with heavy clubs secured to their wrists with leather straps.

I was glad they drove away without delay, as in a very few minutes we should have had all the idlers in the neighborhood about us.

As soon as I had sufficient control over my organs of speech, I turned to one of my guardians—the one whose mien seemed to me the least forbidding—and asked what I had done.

* Anglicized : Mind your eye.

“Hans, he asks what he has done—ha, ha, ha !” says he to his comrade.

Their laughter fairly chilled my blood.

It was not long before a shadow enveloped us, and the sound of the horses’ feet echoed under an archway. We were at the entrance of the Raspelhaus. It is there that one may say :

“Dans cet antre,
Je vois fort bien comme l’on entre,
Et ne vois point comme on en sort.” *

All is not rose-colored in this world. From the persecutions of Rap I fell into a dungeon, from which it is only the minority who have the good fortune to escape.

Dark, spacious courts ; windows in long lines like a hospital, and furnished with grating ; not the smallest clump of verdure, not even the leaf of a bush or a spear of grass—such was my new lodging-place. It was enough to make one pull out his hair by the handfuls.

The police officers and the jailer put me provisionally into a sort of anteroom.

The jailer, as well as I remember, was called Kasper Schluessel. With his gray woolen cap, his pipe in his mouth, and his bunch of keys at his waist, he reminded me of the god Hibou of the Caribs. He had the same large eyes, with

* I see very well how one gets into this den (or cave), but I do not see how one gets out.

a yellow circle, that see in the night, a nose like a comma, while his neck disappeared between his shoulders.

Schluessel locked me in as mechanically as one locks his bureau drawer, his thoughts the while seeming to be far away. As for me, I stood fully ten minutes with my hands behind my back, looking down at the floor.

"Rap," said I to myself, after taking a complete survey of the situation—"Rap cried out as he fell, 'I am killed! I am killed!' but he did not say by whom. I will swear it was my neighbor, the old merchant with the green spectacles, and he will be hanged in my place."

This idea I found very consoling, and I consequently breathed more freely. I now proceeded to examine my prison, or rather my cell. It had been newly whitewashed, and there were no sketches on its walls except in one corner, where a gallows had been crudely outlined by my predecessor. Light was admitted by a bull's-eye some nine or ten feet from the floor. As for the furniture, it was limited to a bunch of straw and a bench.

I sat down on the straw and clasped my hands around my knees in the most unenviable frame of mind imaginable. I had not been long seated when it occurred to me that Rap, before breathing his last, may have denounced me. The thought brought me quickly to my feet; I

coughed involuntarily, and imagined I felt a choking sensation, as though the hempen cord were already round my neck.

Just at this moment my hallucinations were interrupted by footsteps in the passageway. Schluesel opened my door and bade me follow him. He was still assisted by the two officers who had had the honor of lodging me in prison. They received me with a triumphant smile as I issued forth, as though they were proud of their achievement. I seemed to take no notice of them, but, summoning all my fortitude, I followed with a tolerably firm step.

We passed through long galleries, lighted from distance to distance by small grated windows. On the way I saw, behind massive bars, the famous Jic-Jack, who was to pay the penalty of his crimes the next day on the gallows. He was in a strait-jacket, and was gayly singing :

“Je suis le roi de ces montagnes !”

When he saw me, he cried out :

“Ho, comrade! I’ll keep a place for you at my right.”

The two policemen and the god Hibou looked at one another and smiled, while I felt the goose-flesh creep down my back and shoulders to my waist.

III.

SCHLUESSEL led the way to a large room furnished with rows of benches arranged in a semi-circle. The aspect of this spacious hall, deserted as it was, with its two high, grated windows, its image of the Saviour in old browned oak with his arms extended and his head inclined toward one shoulder, inspired me with a sort of religious fear that harmonized with my situation.

All my ideas of false accusation disappeared, and my lips involuntarily murmured a prayer.

I had not prayed for a long time. Misfortune always brings a submissive frame of mind.

Before me, on an elevated seat, sat two men with their backs toward the windows, which put their faces in the shade. I nevertheless recognized Von Spreckdal by his aquiline profile. The other was a stout, round-faced man, with short, pudgy hands. They were both in judicial robes.

Below them sat the clerk of the court, Conrad. He was writing at a small table and stroking his cheek with the feather-end of his pen. When I arrived, he leaned back in his chair, and seemed to study my face with deep interest.

I was shown to a seat, when Von Spreckdal asked me, in a loud, distinct tone :

“Christian Venius, where did you get this sketch ?”

He held up my nocturnal sketch, then in his possession. It was passed to me. After looking at it a moment, I replied :

“I made it.”

There was a prolonged silence. The clerk wrote down my answer. As I listened to his pen going over the paper, I thought : “What is the meaning of the question they have just asked me ? What relation has my sketch to the kick I gave Rap ?”

“You drew this sketch, you say ?” said Von Spreckdal. “Very well. Where is the scene ?”

“Nowhere in reality, but only in my imagination.”

“Do you mean to tell us that you imagined all these details—that you did not copy them somewhere ?”

“That is just what I want to say. This is purely a fancy sketch. I may have seen somewhere at some time a court-yard similar to the one represented here ; but the details are all imaginary.”

“Christian Venius,” said the judge, in solemn tone, “I counsel you to reflect and to tell the truth ; believe me, it will be better for you in the end.”

Indignant at having my veracity called in question, I replied, with some spirit : “I have said, sir, that this is entirely a work of the imagination—of my imagination—and I repeat it.”

"Write down his answer," said Von Spreckdal to the clerk.

Again that ominous pen went scratching over the paper.

"And this woman," continued the judge—"this woman who is being killed at the mouth of this well—did you imagine this detail with the rest?"

"Certainly."

"You have never witnessed such a scene?"

"Never!"

Von Spreckdal rose as though he was exasperated; then, resuming his seat, he seemed to consult with his colleague.

The mysterious whispering in front of me, the three men standing behind me, the silence that reigned in the hall—everything combined to make me shudder.

"What does all this mean? What am I accused of?" I asked myself.

Suddenly Von Spreckdal said to my guardians:

"Reconduct your prisoner to the vehicle in which you brought him here. We will all go to Metzer Street." Then turning to me, he added: "Christian Venius, you are in a perilous situation. You should remember that, if the law is inflexible, there still remains to you the mercy of Heaven, which you may merit by confessing your crime."

These words stunned me like a blow with a

hammer. I threw up my arms and fell back, crying out :

“ Ah ! what a frightful dream ! ”

The next moment I was unconscious, having swooned.

When I regained my senses, I was being driven slowly through one of the principal streets ; another vehicle preceded us. The two servants of the law were still watching over me. One of them, on the way, offered a pinch of snuff to his *confrère*. I mechanically reached out my fingers toward the box ; but he drew it away, as though he feared there was contamination in my touch.

My cheeks reddened from shame and indignation, and I turned away to conceal my emotion.

“ If you don’t look out,” said the man with the snuff-box, “ we’ll have to put a pair of bracelets on you ; do you hear ? ”

The wretch ! I could have strangled him. Under the circumstances, however, I deemed it wiser to remain silent than to make the attempt.

In a few minutes the two carriages came to a stop. One of my guardians got out, while the other held me by the collar till his comrade was ready to receive me, when he pushed me rudely toward him.

These precautions to retain possession of my person augured nothing good ; still I was far from imagining the exceeding gravity of the accusation that hung over me, when an alarming cir-

cumstance opened my eyes and threw me into despair.

They had led me, or rather pushed me, into a low, narrow passageway, with an irregular, broken pavement. Along the side of the wall there was a pool of yellowish water that exhaled a most disagreeable odor. The passage was quite dark. Beyond, it was evident there was a court-yard.

As I advanced I felt myself more and more possessed with an indescribable terror. It was a feeling such as I had never experienced before; there was something supernatural about it; it seemed to me a sort of nightmare. I hesitated at every step.

“Go on! go on!” cried one of the ruffians behind me, at the same time pushing me rudely forward.

But what was my amazement when I saw at the end of the passage the court I had sketched the preceding night, with its walls furnished with hooks, its piles of old rubbish, its chicken-coop, and its rabbit-cage! Not a window, large or small, high or low, not a broken pane, in short, not a single detail, had been omitted.

I was overwhelmed by this strange revelation.

Near the well stood the two judges, Von Spreckdal and Richter. At their feet the old woman lay stretched out on her back. Her long, white hair was spread out over the pavement, her face was deep purple, her eyes were half open, and

her tongue half protruded from her mouth. The spectacle she presented was indescribably horrible.

"Well," said Von Spreckdal, in a tone of the utmost gravity, "what have you to say, sir?"

I made no response.

"Do you confess to having thrown this woman, Theresa Becker, into this well, after having strangled her in order to rob her of her money?"

"I strangle this woman? I rob her of her money? Never! I never knew her, never saw her till now! Never, as Heaven is my judge!"

"That is sufficient," said he; and, without adding a word, he left the yard with his *confrère*.

My guardians now seemed to think they were justified in putting handcuffs on me. They took me back to the Rasperhaus. I was completely crushed; what to think, I knew not; even my conscience troubled me. I almost thought that I had murdered the old woman, but how, when? My brain was confused; everything seemed to dance before my eyes!

It was evident that the two policemen already saw me on the road to the gallows.

I will not attempt to describe the agony of mind I suffered that night as I sat on my bunch of straw, the bull's-eye window before and above me and the gallows in perspective, and heard, from hour to hour, the watchman cry out: "One o'clock, and all is well! two o'clock, and all is well!" and so on the night through.

Every one will be able to form some idea of such a night. It is not true that it is better to suffer innocently than being guilty. For the soul, yes ; but for the body, there is no difference. On the contrary, it curses its lot, struggles and tries to escape, knowing that its rôle ends with the cord. Add to all this its regrets at not having sufficiently enjoyed life, and at having listened to the soul when it preached abstinence.

“Ah ! if I had only known,” it cried, “you would not have led me about by the nose with your big words and fine phrases ! You would not have allured me with your seductive promises. I would have had many a happy hour, lost to me now for ever. Be temperate, govern your passions, said you. I was temperate, I did govern my passions. What have I gained by it ? They are going to hang me and you ; afterward, you will be apostrophized as the sublime and stoical soul that fell a martyr to the errors of the law and its ministers. Of me, not a word will be said.”

Such were the reflections of my poor body in my extremity.

The day finally began to appear. At first, pale and undecided, it shed a vague glimmer on my bull's-eye window ; then, little by little, the sun neared the horizon. Without, everything began to be astir ; it chanced to be market-day, Friday. I could hear the carts pass, loaded with vegetables, and sometimes catch a few words of the rustics

who were driving them. I could hear them opening the market opposite ; then came the arranging of the benches.

Finally, it was broad day, and going and coming and murmur of voices told me that the crowd without must be quite large.

With the light, my courage in some measure returned. Some of my gloomy forebodings disappeared, and something akin to hope usurped their place. I felt a desire to look out.

Other prisoners before me had managed to get up to the bull's-eye ; they had dug holes in the wall in order to accomplish the task more easily, or, rather, to make it possible. I climbed up in my turn, and, when I was seated most uncomfortably on the edge of the oval around the window and could look out at the crowd, the life, the movement, abundant tears ran down my cheeks. I thought no longer of putting an end to my earthly existence ; I felt a desire to live and to get back into the busy world again.

“ Ah ! ” said I to myself, “ to live is to be happy ! Let them harness me to a wheelbarrow, or attach a ball and chain to my leg—let them do no matter what to me, so that they only let me live ! ”

The old market, with its pointed roof supported by heavy pillars, offered a most interesting spectacle. Old women seated beside their piles of vegetables, their coops of poultry, and their bas-

kets of eggs ; behind them were ranged the dealers in old clothes, Jews with complexions resembling the color of old boxwood ; then there were the butchers, with their bare arms, cutting and sawing their meats ; countrymen, with their broad-brimmed felt hats pushed back on their heads, calm and grave, their hands, behind their backs, resting on their evergreen sticks, and tranquilly smoking their pipes. Add to all this the noise and turmoil of the crowd, the various tones of the voices, and the expressive gestures, which convey to the distant observer the nature of the discussion, and so perfectly reflect the character of the speaker. In short, the scene fascinated me, and, despite my unenviable position, I felt happy in the thought that I still lived.

While I was thus occupied looking out of my window, a man, a butcher, passed. He was bent forward, and carried a large quarter of beef on his shoulders ; his arms were bare, and extended above his head. His hair was long, like that of the Sicambrian of Salvator, and so fell about his face that I could not distinguish his features ; and yet, at the first glance, I involuntarily shuddered.

“It is he !” I exclaimed aloud.

All the blood in my body seemed suddenly to have taken leave of me ; there was apparently none in my face or extremities. I hastened down from the window with all possible expedition, feeling chilled to the very ends of my fingers.

"It is he! he is there!" I stammered; "and I, I am here to expiate his crime. Great Heaven! what shall I do? what shall I do?"

An idea, an inspiration from Heaven, flashed upon my mind. I reached for my crayon, which I providentially chanced to have in my coat-pocket. Then I mounted to my seat again, and set to work to sketch the scene of the murder, with a nerve that seemed to me truly superhuman. There was no more uncertainty; every stroke of the pencil told. I had my man; I saw him; he was there before me.

At ten o'clock the jailer entered my cell. His owl-like impassibility gave way to an exhibition of something akin to admiration.

"Is it possible?" said he. "Up, and in such good spirits!"

"Go, bring me my judges," said I, in a triumphant tone, as I gave the last touches to my sketch; "I wish to see them here."

"They are waiting for you," said Schluessel.

"Waiting for me! Let them come here; I must see them here!" I cried, as I gave the last strokes to the mysterious personage. He lived. His figure, foreshortened on the wall, stood out on the white background with a life-like vigor that was startling.

The jailer, without waiting to remonstrate or to make any observations, disappeared.

In a few minutes he returned, accompanied by

the two judges. They seemed speechless with amazement.

But I, pointing to my sketch on the wall and trembling in every limb, cried out :

“There is your assassin !”

Von Spreckdal after a moment's silence asked :

“His name ?”

“I have no idea, but he, at this moment, is in the market ; he is cutting up meat in the third stall to the left as you enter from Trabaus Street.”

“What do you think ?” he asked his colleague.

“Let the man be sent for,” said Richter, gravely.

The order was obeyed by some officers, who had remained without the cell. The judges remained standing, to examine the sketch more minutely. Von Spreckdal, especially, seemed to take the deepest interest in it. I dropped down on my pile of straw, and rested my head on my knees, quite exhausted.

It was not long before we heard approaching steps in the archway. Those who have never awaited the hour of deliverance and counted the minutes, which then seem of interminable length ; those who have never experienced the harrowing emotions of doubt, hope, terror, and despair—such as they can have no conception of my feelings at this moment. I should have distinguished the step of the murderer, though surrounded by a thousand others. They approached. The judges

themselves could not conceal a certain nervous agitation. I looked up, and fixed my eyes upon the door. It opened, and the man entered. His face was flushed, and his jaws were convulsively pressed together, while his little, gray, restless eyes looked wildly about from under his heavy, reddish brows.

Von Spreckdal silently pointed to the sketch.

This brawny man had looked at it but for a moment, when the color left his cheeks, and, uttering a cry that sent a thrill of horror through us all, he extended his strong arms, as though he would sweep aside every obstacle that hindered his escape, and sprang toward the door. A terrible struggle in the corridor ensued ; you could hear nothing but the heavy breathing of the butcher, his muttered imprecations, an occasional cry of the guards, and the shuffling of their feet on the flagstones.

It was brief, however ; for scarcely more than a minute had elapsed when the assassin reëntered, his chin on his chest, his eyes bloodshot, and his hands secured behind his back. He looked up again at the sketch, seemed to reflect for a moment, and then, like one thinking aloud, he muttered :

“ Who could have seen me ?—at midnight ! ”

I was saved.

Many years have passed since this terrible adventure. Thank Heaven ! I make no more sil-

houettes, nor do I paint the portraits of burgomasters. By hard work and perseverance I have conquered a place, and I earn my living honorably by producing works of art—the only object, in my opinion, a veritable artist should ever have in view. But every circumstance connected with the nocturnal sketch has always remained fresh in my memory. Sometimes, in the midst of my work, my thoughts wander back to the days I spent in Rap's garret—to the deprivations and humiliations I experienced there. Then I lay down my palette and dream—dream often for hours.

But how a crime, committed by a man I had never known, at a place I had never seen, could be pictured by my pencil even to the most unimportant details, is something I have never been able to comprehend.

Was it accident? No! And, then, what is accident? Is it anything else than an effect produced by a cause of which we are ignorant?

May not Schiller be right when he says: "The soul is not affected by the decay of matter: when the body sleeps, it spreads its radiant wings and goes Heaven knows where. What it then does, no one can know; but inspiration sometimes betrays the secret of its nocturnal wanderings."

Who knows? Nature is more audacious in her realities than man's imagination in its loftiest flights!

THE DEAN'S WATCH.

I.

THE day before the Christmas of 1832, my friend Wilfrid, his double-bass slung over his shoulder, and I, with violin under my arm, were on our way from the Black Forest to Heidelberg. An extraordinary quantity of snow had fallen that season. As far as our eyes could see over the great desert plain before us, not a trace of the route, either of road or path, was to be discovered. The north wind whistled its shrill aria about our ears with a monotonous persistence, and Wilfrid, with wallet flattened against his thin back, his long heron-legs stretched to the utmost, and the visor of his little flat cap pulled down over his nose, strode along before me, humming a gay air from "Undine." Every now and then he turned his head with a grim smile and cried:

"Comrade, play me the waltz from 'Robin'—
I wish to dance!"

A peal of laughter always followed, and then

the brave fellow would push on again with fresh courage. I toiled on behind in his footsteps, with the snow up to my knees, and my spirits sinking lower and lower every moment.

The heights about Heidelberg had begun to appear on the distant horizon, and we were hoping to reach the town before nightfall, when we heard the gallop of a horse behind us. It was about five o'clock, and great flakes of snow were whirling about in the gray light. Soon the rider was within twenty steps. He slackened his pace, examining us out of one corner of his eye. We also examined him.

Imagine a big man with red beard and hair, wrapped in a brown cloak, over which was loosely thrown a pelisse of fox-skins ; on his head a superb cocked-hat ; his hands buried in fur gloves reaching to the elbows. On the croup of his stout stallion was strapped a well-filled valise. Evidently he was some burly sheriff or burgomaster.

"Hey, my lads !" he cried, drawing one of his big hands from the muff which hung across his saddle-bow, and clapping his charger's neck, "we are going to Heidelberg, I see, to try a little music."

Wilfrid eyed the traveler askance.

"Is that any affair of yours, sir ?" he answered gruffly.

"Eh ? yes ; I should have a piece of advice to give you."

"Well, you can keep it till it's asked for," retorted Wilfrid, quickening his pace.

I cast a second glance at our new companion. He looked exactly like a great cat, with ears standing out from his head, his eyelids half closed, and a long bristling mustache; altogether, he had a sort of purring, paternal air.

"My friend," he began again, this time addressing me, "the best thing you can do is to return whence you came."

"Why, sir?"

"The famous Maestro Prinenti, from Novara, has announced a grand Christmas concert at Heidelberg. Everybody is going to it; you will not get a single kreutzer."

This was too much for Wilfrid.

"A fig for your maestro, and all the Prinentis in the world!" he cried, snapping his fingers. "This lad here, with his long curls and blue eyes, and not a hair yet on his chin, is worth an army of your Italian charlatans. Though he never played outside the Black Forest, he can handle a bow with the first musician in Europe, and will draw melody from his violin such as was never heard before in Heidelberg."

"Hear, hear!" cried the stranger.

"It is just as I tell you," said Wilfrid, blowing on his fingers, which were red with the cold.

Then he set out to run, and I followed him as best I might, thinking he wished to make game of

the traveler, who kept up with us, however, at a little trot.

In this way we went on in silence for more than half a league. Suddenly the stranger cried out, in a harsh voice :

“Whatever your talents may be, go back to the Black Forest. We have vagabonds enough in Heidelberg already without you. It is good advice I give you ; you had best profit by it.”

Wilfrid was about to make an angry retort, but the rider had started off at a gallop, and already reached the grand avenue of the Elector. At the same moment a great flock of crows rose from the plain, and seemed to follow him, filling the air with their loud cries.

About seven o'clock in the evening we reached Heidelberg. There, in fact, we found posted on all the walls Prinetti's flaming placards, “Grand Concert, Solo,” etc., etc. We wandered about among the different ale-houses, in which we met several musicians from the Black Forest, all old comrades of ours, who immediately engaged us to play in their band. There were old Bremer, the violoncellist ; his two sons, Ludwig and Carl, capital second violins ; Heinrich Siebel, the clarinet player ; and big Bertha with her harp. Wilfrid, with his bass-viol, and myself as first violin, made up the troupe.

It was agreed that we should all go together, make one purse, and divide after Christmas.

Wilfrid had already engaged a room for himself and me. It was on the sixth story of the little tavern "Sheep's Foot," in the middle of the Holdergasse, and was only a garret, though, luckily, it had a sheet-iron stove, in which we lighted a fire to dry ourselves.

While we were sitting quietly over the fire, roasting chestnuts and discussing a pot of wine, who should come tripping up the stairs and knock at the door but little Annette, the maid of the inn, in scarlet petticoat and black velvet bodice, with cheeks like roses and lips as red as cherries. Next moment she had thrown herself into my arms with a cry of joy.

We were old friends, the pretty Annette and I, for we were both from the same village, and, to say truth, my heart had long been captive to her bright eyes and coquettish airs.

"I saw you go up just now," she said, drawing a stool to my side, "and here I am, come for a minute's talk with you."

With that she began such a string of questions about this one and that—in fact, about every one in our village—that I declare to you it was as much as I could do to answer the half of them. Every little while she would stop and look at me with such a tender air—we would have been there till this time, had not suddenly Mother Gredel Dick screamed from the bottom of the stairs :

"Annette ! Annette ! are you ever coming ?"

"This minute, madame, this minute," cried the poor child, jumping up in a fright. She gave me a little pat on the cheek and flew to the door. But just as she was going out, she stopped.

"Ah!" she cried, turning back, "I forgot to tell you. Have you heard—"

"What?"

"The death of our prorektor Zahn?"

"Well, what is that to us?"

"Ah, yes; but take care, sir, take care—if your papers are not all right! To-morrow morning at eight o'clock they will come to ask for them. They have arrested, oh! so many people during the last two weeks. The prorektor was assassinated yesterday evening, in the library, at the Cloister of Saint Christopher. Last week, the old priest, Ulmet Elias, who lived in the Jews' quarter, was killed in the same way. Only a few days before that they murdered the nurse, Christina Haas, and Seligmann, the agate merchant of the Durlachstrasse. So, my poor Kasper," she added, with a tender glance, "take good care of yourself, and be sure that your papers are all right."

All the while she was speaking the cries below continued:

"Annette, oh, Annette, *will* you come? Oh, the miserable creature, to leave me here all alone!"

And now, too, we could hear the shouts of the guests in the saloon calling for wine, beer, ham,

sausages. Annette saw that she must go, and ran down the stairs as quickly as she had come up.

"Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !" I heard her soft voice answering her mistress, "what can be the matter, madame, that you should make such an outcry ? One would think that the house was on fire."

Wilfrid closed the door after her and came back to his seat. We looked at each other with some uneasiness.

"This is strange news," said he, at last. "At any rate, your papers are all in order ?"

"Certainly," I replied, and showed him my pass.

"Good ! There is mine. I had it viséed before we left. But still, all these murders bode no good to us. I am afraid we shall make but a poor business here. Many families must be in mourning, and then, besides all these annoyances, the trouble which the police will give us."

"Bah !" cried I, "you take too dismal a view of everything."

We continued to talk about these strange events until long past midnight. The fire in our little stove lighted up the angles of the roof, the square dormer-window with its three cracked panes of glass, the mattress spread upon the bare boards, the blackened beams overhead, the little fir table, which cast an unsteady shadow on the worm-eaten floor. A mouse, attracted by the

heat, darted back and forth like an arrow along the wall. We could hear the wind without, whistling and bellowing around the high chimney-stacks, sweeping the snow from the gutters beneath the eaves in misty swirls. I was dreaming of Annette. Silence had fallen upon us. Suddenly Wilfrid, throwing off his coat, cried :

“It is time to sleep ; put another stick of wood in the stove, and let us go to bed.”

“Yes, that is the best thing we can do,” said I, and began to pull off my boots. Two minutes afterward we were stretched on the mattress, the coverings drawn up to our chins, and a great log under our heads for a pillow. Wilfrid was asleep in a moment. The light from the little stove blazed up and died away, the wind redoubled its violence without, and, in the midst of dreams of Annette, I, too, in my turn, slept the sleep of the just.

About two o'clock in the morning I was awakened by a strange noise. At first I thought it was a cat running along the gutters ; but, my ear being close to the rafters, I could not remain long in doubt. Some one was walking over the roof. I touched Wilfrid with my elbow, to awaken him.

“Hist !” whispered he, pressing my hand.

He also had heard the noise. The fire was just dying out ; the last feeble flame flickered on the crumbling walls. I was on the point of

springing from the bed, when, at a single blow, the little window, kept closed by a fragment of brick, was pushed open. A pale face, with red hair, eyes gleaming with phosphorescent light, and quivering cheeks, appeared in the opening, and looked about the room. Our fright was so great that we could not utter a sound. The man passed first one leg, then the other, through the window, and descended into the garret so carefully that not a board creaked under his footsteps.

This man, with heavy, round shoulders, short and thick-set, his face wrinkled and set like a tiger crouched to spring, was none other than the rider who had overtaken us on the road to Heidelberg. But what a change in his appearance since then ! In spite of the excessive cold, he was in his shirt-sleeves, a pair of breeches belted about his waist, woolen stockings, and shoes with silver buckles. A long knife, flecked with blood, glittered in his hand.

Wilfrid and I gave ourselves up for lost. But he did not seem to see us under the shadow of the sloping roof, although the fire was fanned again into a blaze by the current of cold air from the open window. The intruder seated himself on a stool, cowering and shivering in a strange way. Suddenly his greenish-yellow eyes fixed themselves on me, his nostrils dilated ; for more than a minute, which seemed to me an age, he stared at me. The blood stood still in my veins. Then,

at last, turning toward the fire, he coughed with a husky, hoarse sound, like that which a cat makes, without moving a muscle of his face. Drawing a watch from the fob of his pantaloons, he seemed to look at the hour, and then, whether from absence of mind or some other reason, I know not, laid it upon the table. At length, rising from his seat with an air of uncertainty, he looked toward the window, appeared for a moment to hesitate, and then passed out of the door, leaving it wide open behind him.

I jumped up to shove the bolt, but already the man's steps were creaking on the staircase two stories below. An irresistible curiosity overcame my terror. I heard a window open, which looked upon the court, and, in a moment, I was at the dormer in the landing of the stairs on the same side. The court, seen from this height, was like a deep well. A wall, fifty or sixty feet high, divided it into two parts. On the right was the court of a pork-butcher; on the left, that of the Sheep's Foot. The wall was covered with moss and the rank vegetation which flourishes in the shade. Its summit reached from the window which the marauder had just opened, in a straight line, to the roof of a great, gloomy building in the rear of the Bergstrasse. All this I took in at a glance, as the moon shone out from among the heavy snow-laden clouds, and I trembled as I saw the man come out through the window, and fly

along the top of this wall, his head bent forward, the long knife in his hand, while the wind whistled and wailed a dismal chorus.

He gained the roof in front, and disappeared through a window. I believed I must be dreaming. For several moments I remained with open mouth, my breast bare, and my hair blown about by the wind and wet by the sleet which fell from the eaves. At last, waking from my stupor, I returned to our garret, and found Wilfrid with face blanched and haggard with fright, and muttering a prayer under his breath. I hastened to bolt the door, throw some wood into the stove, and slip on my clothes.

"Well?" asked my comrade, getting out of bed.

"Well," I replied, "we are safe this time. If that man did not see us, it was only because Heaven was not ready yet for us to die."

"Yes," he murmured, "yes; it is one of the assassins Annette told us about. Good Heavens! what a face! and what a knife!"

He fell back on the mattress. I swallowed what was left of the wine in the pitcher; and, as the fire was now burning brightly, filling the room with its heat, and the bolt seemed a strong one, I began to regain my courage.

Still, the watch was there; the man might return to look for it. Our fears awoke again at this idea.

"What is to be done now?" asked Wilfrid.

“Our shortest plan will be to go back at once to the Black Forest. I have no wish to play any more double-bass. You can do as you choose—”

“But why? What should make us go back? We have done no crime.”

“Hush! speak low!” whispered he. “The word *crime* alone is enough to hang us, if any one heard. Poor devils like us serve as examples for others. Were they only to find this watch here—”

“Come, Wilfrid,” said I, “it is no use to lose one’s head. I dare say a crime has been committed last night in the neighborhood; it is more than probable; but, instead of flying, an honest man should aid justice; he should—”

“But how aid it? how?”

“The simplest way will be to take the watch to-morrow to the provost, and tell him what has taken place.”

“Never! never! I would not dare touch the watch.”

“Very well; I will go myself. Come, let us go to bed again.”

“No; I can not sleep any more.”

“As you will. Light your pipe, then, and let us talk.”

✓ As soon as day dawned I took the watch from the table. It was a very fine one, with two dials—one for the hours, the other for the minutes. Wilfrid seemed, however, by this time, to have regained his assurance.

“Kasper,” he said, “all things considered, it will be better for me to go to the provost. You are too young for such a piece of business. You will not be able to explain properly.”

“Just as you choose,” I replied.

“Besides, it would seem strange for a man of my age to send a child.”

“Oh, yes, Wilfrid ; I understand.”

I saw that his self-esteem had driven him to this resolution. He would have been ashamed to own to his comrades that he had shown less courage than I.

He took the watch, and we descended the stairs with grave faces. Passing through the alley which leads to the street Saint Cristopher, we heard the clinking of glasses and knives and forks. At the same time I recognized the voices of old Bremer and his two sons.

“Faith, Wilfrid,” said I, “a good glass of wine would not be bad before we go out.”

I pushed open the door into the saloon. All our friends were there ; violins and horns hung upon the walls—the harp in one corner. They received us with joyful cries of welcome, and made us take seats at the table.

“Heh !” cried old Bremer, “good luck, comrades ! See the snow, and the wind ! The saloons will all be full. Every flake of snow in the air is a florin in our pockets !”

The sight of my little Annette, as fresh and

piquant as ever, smiling on me with eyes and lips full of love, gave me new spirits. The best pieces of ham were for me ; and, every time that she came to set down a glass near me, her hand would tenderly press my shoulder. Ah ! how my heart beat as I thought of the nuts which we had cracked together the night before !

Still, the pale face of the assassin would pass from time to time before my eyes, making me shudder at the recollection. I looked at Wilfrid. He was grave and thoughtful. As eight o'clock struck, we all rose to go, when suddenly the door opened, and three mean-looking fellows, with leaden faces and eyes sharp as rats', followed by several more of the same sort, presented themselves on the threshold. One of them, with a long nose, which seemed to be on the scent for some mischief, a great cudgel in his fist, advanced with the demand—

“Your papers, gentlemen !”

Every one hastened to satisfy him. Unhappily, however, Wilfrid, who was standing near the stove, was seized with a sudden fit of trembling ; and, as he saw the practiced eye of the police-agent regarding him with an equivocal look, the unlucky idea occurred to him of letting the watch slip down into his boot. Before it reached its destination, however, the officer stepped up to him, and, slapping him on the leg, cried, in a bantering tone :

"Ah ha! something seems to trouble you here!"

Upon this, Wilfrid, to the consternation of all, succumbed entirely. He fell back upon a bench, as pale as death; and Madoc, the chief of police, with a malicious shout of laughter, drew forth the watch from his pantaloons. But the moment the agent looked at it, he became grave.

"Let no one go out!" he thundered to his followers; "we've the whole gang here. 'Tis the watch of the dean, Daniel Van der Berg. Quick! the handcuffs!"

Thereupon arose a terrible tumult. Giving ourselves up for lost, I slipped down under the bench close to the wall. In spite of their protests, poor old Bremer, his sons, and Wilfrid were all handcuffed. Just then I felt a soft little hand passed gently about my neck. It was Annette's, and I pressed my lips upon it as a last adieu, when, seizing my ear, she pulled it gently—gently. Under one end of the table I saw the cellar-door open; I slipped through; the trap-door closed.

All had passed in a second. In my hiding-place I heard them trampling over the door; then everything was still; my unlucky comrades were gone. Without, on the door-step, I heard Mother Gredel Dick lamenting in shrill tones the dishonor which had fallen on the Sheep's Foot.

All day long I remained squeezed behind a

hogshead, with back bent and legs doubled under me—a prey to a thousand fears. Should a dog stray into the cellar, should the landlady take a fancy to refill the jug herself, or a fresh cask have to be broached—the least chance might be my destruction. I imagined old Bremer and his sons, Wilfrid, big Bertha herself, all hanging from the gibbet on the Harberg, in the middle of a great flock of crows that were feasting at their expense. My hair stood on end.

Annette, as anxious as myself, carefully closed the door each time she left the cellar.

“Leave the door alone,” I heard the old woman say. “Are you a fool, to lose half your time in opening it?”

After that the door remained open. I saw the tables surrounded by new guests, who discussed in loud tones the doings of the famous band of murderers who had just been captured, and exulted over the fate in store for them. All the musicians from the Black Forest, they said, were bandits, who made a pretense of their trade to find their way into houses and spy out the bolts and bars, and then, next morning, the master would be found murdered in his bed, the mistress and children with their throats cut. They ought all to be exterminated without pity.

“All the town will go to see them hanged!” cried Mother Gredel. “It will be the happiest day of my life!”

“And to think that the watch of Master Daniel was the means of their capture ! He told the police of its loss, and gave them a description of it, this morning ; and, an hour after, Madoc bagged the whole covey.”

Thereupon followed shouts of laughter and triumph. Shame, indignation, terror, made me hot and cold by turns.

Night came at last. All the drinkers had gone, save two or three who still lingered over their cups. A single candle remained lighted in the saloon.

“Go to bed, madame,” said Annette’s soft voice to Mother Gredel ; “I will stay till these gentlemen go.”

The carousers, tipsy as they were, understood the hint, and took their leave, one by one.

“At last,” thought I, as I heard the last one go, stumbling and hiccoughing through the door, “they are all gone. Mother Gredel will go to bed. Annette will come without delay to deliver me.”

In this agreeable anticipation, I had already disentangled my numb limbs, when these dreadful words of the portly landlady met my ears :

“Annette, go and close up, and do not forget the bar. I am going myself into the cellar.”

Alas ! this seemed to be the praiseworthy, but for me most unlucky, custom of the good lady—so as to see herself that all was right.

“But, madame,” stammered Annette, “there is no need ; the cask is not empty—”

“Mind your own business,” interrupted her mistress, whose candle already was shining at the top of the steps.

I had hardly time to crouch again behind the cask. The old woman went from one cask to the other, stooping beneath the low ceiling of the vault.

“Oh, the hussy !” I heard her mutter ; “how she lets the wine leak out ! But only wait—I will teach her to close the stopcocks better. Just to see ! just to see !”

The light cast dark shadows on the walls glistening with moisture. I made myself as small as possible.

Suddenly, just as I thought the danger over, I heard a sigh from the stout dame—a sigh so long, so lugubrious, that it struck me at once. Something extraordinary must have happened. I risked a look. To my horror, I saw Mother Gredel, with open mouth and eyes starting from her head, staring at the ground beneath the cask behind which I was crouching motionless. She had espied one of my feet, projecting beneath the joist which supported the hogshead. No doubt, she thought that she had discovered the chief of the brigands, hidden there for the purpose of cutting her throat during the night. My resolution was taken quickly. Rising up, I said, in a low voice :

“Madame, for Heaven’s sake, have pity on me! I am—”

But thereupon, without listening, without even looking at me, she began to scream like any peacock—the shrillest, the most ear-piercing screams—and at the same time to clamber up the stairs as fast as her fat body would let her. Almost beside myself with terror, I clung to her robe—fell on my knees beside her. But this was worse still.

“Help! help! assassins! murder!” she shrieked. “Oh! oh! Let me go! Take my money! Oh! oh!”

It was frightful.

“Look at me, madame,” I tried to say; “I am not what you think.”

But she was crazy with fear; she raved, she gasped, she bawled at the top of her lungs—so that, had we not been underground, the whole quarter would have been aroused. In despair, and furious at her stupid folly, I clambered over her back, and gained the door before her—slammed it in her face, and shoved the bolt. During the struggle the light had been extinguished, and Mistress Gredel remained in the dark, her voice only faintly heard at intervals.

Exhausted, almost annihilated, I looked at Annette, whose distress was equal to mine. We stood listening in silence to the faint cries. Gradually they died away and ceased. The poor woman must have fainted.

“Oh, Kasper!” cried Annette, clasping her hands. “What is to be done? Fly! Save yourself! Have you killed her?”

“Killed her? I?”

“No matter—fly! Here—quick!”

And she drew the bar from before the street-door. I rushed into the street without even thanking her—ungrateful wretch that I was! The night was black as ink—not a star to be seen, not a lamp lighted, snow driving before the wind. I ran on for half an hour, at least, before I stopped to take breath. I looked up—imagine my despair—there I was, right in front of the Sheep’s Foot again. In my terror I had made the tour of the quarter perhaps two or three times for aught I knew. My legs were like lead; my knees trembled.

The inn, but just before deserted, was buzzing like a beehive. Lights went from window to window. It was full, no doubt, of police-agents. Exhausted with hunger and fatigue, desperate, not knowing where to find refuge, I took the most singular of all my resolutions.

“Faith,” said I to myself, “one death as well as another! It is no worse to be hung than to leave one’s bones on the road to the Black Forest. Here goes!”

— And I entered the inn to deliver myself up to justice. Besides the shabby men with crushed hats and big sticks, whom I had already seen in

the morning, who were going and coming, and prying everywhere, before a table were seated the grand provost Zimmer, dressed all in black, solemn, keen-eyed, and the secretary Roth, with his red wig, imposing smile, and great, flat ears, like oyster-shells. They paid hardly any attention at all to me—a circumstance which at once modified my resolution. I took a seat in one corner of the hall, behind the great stove, in company with two or three of the neighbors, who had run in to see what was going on, and called calmly for a pint of wine and a plate of *Sauerkraut*.

Annette came near betraying me.

“Ah, good heavens!” she exclaimed; “is it possible that you are here?”

But luckily no one noticed her exclamation, and I ate my meal with better appetite, and listened to the examination of the good lady Gredel, who sat propped up in a big arm-chair, with hair disheveled, and eyes still dilated by her fright.

“Of what age did this man seem to be?” asked the provost.

“Forty or fifty, sir. It was an immense man, with black whiskers, or brown—I don’t know exactly which—and a long nose, and green eyes.”

“Had he no marks of any kind—scars, for instance?”

“No—I can’t remember. Luckily, I screamed so loud he was frightened; and then I defended myself with my nails. He had a great hammer,

and pistols. He seized me by the throat. Ah! you know, sir, when one tries to murder you, you have to defend yourself."

"Nothing more natural, more legitimate, my dear madame. Write, M. Roth: 'The courage and presence of mind of this excellent lady were truly admirable.'"

Then came Annette's turn, who simply declared that she had been so frightened she could remember nothing.

"This will do," said the provost. "If further inquiry is necessary, we will return to-morrow."

The examination being thus ended, every one departed, and I asked Madame Gredel to give me a room for the night. She did not in the least recollect ever having seen me before.

"Annette," she gasped, "take the gentleman to the little green room in the third story. As for myself, sir, you see I can not even stand on my legs! O good Lord! good Lord! what does not one have to go through in this world?"

With this she fell to sobbing, which seemed to relieve her.

"Oh, Kasper, Kasper!" cried Annette, when she had taken me to my room and we were alone, "who would have believed that you were one of the band? I can never, never forgive myself for having loved a brigand!"

"How? Annette, you too?" I exclaimed. "This is too much!"

“No, no!” she cried, throwing her arms about my neck, “you are not one of them—you are too good for that. Still, you are a brave man just the same, to have come back.”

I explained to her that I should have died of cold outside, and that this alone had decided me. After a few minutes, however, we parted, so as not to arouse Mother Gredel's suspicions; and having made certain that none of the windows opened on a wall, and that the bolt on the door was a good one, I went to bed, and soon was fast asleep.

II.

WHEN I drew the curtain of my bed next morning, I saw that the window-panes were white with snow, which was heaped up also on the sill without. I thought mournfully of my poor comrades' fate. How they must have suffered from cold! Old Bremer and big Bertha especially—my heart ached for them.

While I was absorbed in these sad reflections a strange noise arose outside. It drew near the inn, and, not without fear and trembling, I jumped out of bed, and rushed to the window, to see what new danger threatened.

They were bringing the terrible band to confront it with Madame Gredel Dick. My poor

companions came down the street between two files of policemen, and followed by a perfect avalanche of ragamuffins, yelling and hissing like true savages. There was poor Bremer, handcuffed to his son Ludwig, then Carl and Wilfrid, and, last of all, stout Bertha, who walked by herself, lamenting her fate all the while in heart-rending tones :

“For Heaven’s sake, gentlemen, for Heaven’s sake, have pity on a poor innocent harpist ! I—kill ! I—rob ! Oh ! good Lord ! can it be possible ?”

And she wrung her hands. The others looked doleful enough as they walked with heads bent and disheveled hair hanging over their faces.

The procession, rabble and all, turned into the dark alley which led to the inn. Presently the guards drove out the eager crowd, who remained outside in the mud, with their noses flattened against the window-panes.

I dressed myself quickly, and opened my door to see if there were not some chance of escape ; but I could hear voices and footsteps going to and fro down stairs, and made up my mind that the passages were well guarded. My door opened on the landing, just opposite the window which our midnight visitor of the night before must have used in his flight. At first I paid no attention to this window, but, while I remained listening, on a sudden I perceived that it was open—that there

was but little snow on the sill ; and, drawing near, I perceived that there were fresh tracks along the wall. I shuddered at this discovery. The man had been there again ; perhaps he came every night. The cat, the weasel, the ferret, all such beasts of prey, have their accustomed paths in this way. In a moment everything was clear to my mind.

“Ah,” thought I, “if chance has thus put the assassin’s fate in my hands, my poor comrades may be saved.”

Just at this moment the door of the saloon was opened, and I could hear some words of the examination going on.

“Do you admit having participated, on the 20th of this month, in the assassination of the priest Ulmet Elias ?”

Then followed some words which I could not make out, and the door was closed again. I leaned my head on the baluster, debating in my mind a great, a heroic resolution. “Heaven has put the fate of my companions in my hands. I can save them. If I recoil from such a duty, I shall be their murderer ! my peace of mind, my honor, will be gone for ever ! I shall feel myself the most contemptible of men !”

For a long time I hesitated, but all at once my resolution was taken. I descended the stairs and made my way into the hall.

“Have you never seen this watch ?” the prov-

ost was saying to Gredel. "Try to recollect, madame."

Without awaiting her answer, I advanced, and replied myself, in a firm voice : "This watch, sir, I have seen in the hands of the assassin himself ; I recognize it, and I can deliver the assassin into your hands this very night, if you will but listen to me."

Profound silence for a moment followed my address. The astounded officials looked at each other ; my comrades seemed to revive a little.

"Who are you, sir ?" demanded the provost, recovering himself.

"I am the comrade of these unfortunate men, and I am not ashamed to own it," I cried ; "for all of them, though poor, are honest. Not one of them is capable of committing the crime they are accused of."

Once more there was silence. The great Bertha began to sob under her breath. The provost seemed to reflect. At last, looking at me sternly, he said :

"Where do you pretend you will find the assassin for us ?"

"Here, sir, in this house ; and, to convince you, I only ask to speak one moment to you in private."

"Come," said he, rising.

He motioned to the chief detective, Madoc, to follow us, and we went out.

I ran quickly up stairs, the others close behind me. On the third story I stopped before the window, and pointed out the tracks in the snow.

"There are the assassin's footsteps," said I. "This is where he passes every evening. Night before last he came at two o'clock in the morning. Last night he was here ; no doubt he will return to-night."

The provost and Madoc looked at the footsteps for several moments without saying a word.

"And how do you know these are the footprints of the murderer?" asked the chief of police, incredulously.

I told them about the man's entrance into our garret, and pointed out above us the lattice through which I had watched his flight in the moonlight. "It was only by accident," I said, "that I had discovered the footsteps this morning."

"Strange!" muttered the provost. "This modifies considerably the position of the prisoners. But how do you explain the murderer's being in the cellar?"

"The murderer was myself, sir."

And I related in a few words the events of the night before.

"That will do," said he, and then, turning to the chief of police, continued :

"I must confess, Madoc, that these fiddlers'

story has seemed to me by no means conclusive of their having had anything to do with the murders. Besides, their papers establish, for several of them, an *alibi* very hard to disprove. Still, young man, though the account you give us has the appearance of being true, you will remain in our power until it is verified. Madoc, do not lose sight of him, and take your measures accordingly."

With this he went down stairs, collected his papers, and ordered the prisoners to be taken back to jail. Then, casting a look of contempt at the corpulent landlady, he took his departure, followed by his secretary.

"Madame," said Madoc, who remained with two of his men, "you will please preserve the most profound silence as to what has taken place. Also, prepare for this brave lad here the same room he occupied night before last."

His tone admitted of no reply, and Madame Gredel promised by all that was sacred to do whatever they wished, if they would only save her from the brigands.

"Give yourself no uneasiness about the brigands," replied Madoc. "We will stay here all day and all night to protect you. Go quietly about your affairs, and begin by giving us breakfast. Young man, will you do me the honor to breakfast with me?"

My situation did not permit me to decline this offer. I accepted.

We were soon seated in front of a ham and a bottle of Rhine wine. The chief of police, in spite of his leaden face, his keen eye, and great nose like the beak of an eagle, was a jolly enough fellow after a few glasses of wine. He tried to seize Annette by the waist as she passed. He told funny stories, at which the others shouted with laughter. I, however, remained silent, depressed.

"Come, young man," said Madoc, with a laugh, "try to forget the death of your estimable grandmother. We are all mortal. Take a good drink, and chase away all these gloomy thoughts."

So the time slipped away, amid clouds of tobacco-smoke, the jingling of glasses, and clinking of cans. We sat apart during the day in one corner of the saloon. Guests came to drink as usual, but they paid no attention to us. At nine o'clock, however, after the watchman had gone his round, Madoc rose.

"Now," said he, "we must attend to our little business. Close the door and shutters—softly, madame, softly. There, you and Mademoiselle Annette may go to bed."

The chief and his two followers drew from their pockets bars of iron loaded at the ends with leaden balls. Madoc put a fresh cap on his pistol, and placed it carefully in the breast-pocket of his overcoat, so as to be ready at hand.

Then we mounted to the garret. The two at-

tentive Annette had lighted a fire in the stove. Madoc, muttering an oath between his teeth, hastened to throw some water on the coals. Then he pointed to the mattress.

“If you have any mind for it,” said he to me, “you can sleep.”

He blew out the candle, and seated himself with his two acolytes in the back part of the room against the wall. I threw myself on the bed, murmuring a prayer that Heaven would send the assassin.

The hours rolled by. Midnight came. The silence was so profound I could scarcely believe the three men sat there with eye and ear strained to catch the least movement, the slightest sound. Minute after minute passed slowly—slowly. I could not sleep. A thousand terrible images chased each other through my brain. One o’clock struck—two—yet nothing—no one appeared.

At three o’clock one of the policemen moved. I thought the man was coming; but all was silent again as before. I began to think that Madoc would take me for an impostor, to imagine how he would abuse me in the morning. And then my poor comrades—instead of aiding, I had only riveted their chains!

The time seemed now to pass only too rapidly. I wished the night might last for ever, so as to preserve at least a ray of hope for me.

I was going over the same torturing fancies

for the hundredth time, when on a sudden, without my having heard the least sound, the window opened, two eyes gleamed in the aperture. Nothing moved in the garret.

“They have gone to sleep!” thought I, in an agony of suspense.

The head remained there—motionless—watchful. The villain must suspect something! Oh! how my heart thumped—the blood coursed through my veins! And yet cold beads of sweat gathered on my forehead. I ceased to breathe.

Several minutes passed thus; then, suddenly, the man seemed to have decided; he glided down into the garret, with the same noiseless caution as on the previous night.

But at the same instant a cry—a terrible, short, thrilling cry—vibrated through the room.

“We have him!”

Then the whole house was shaken from garret to cellar by cries—the stamping of feet—hoarse shouts. I was petrified by terror. The man bellowed—the others drew their breaths in quick gasps—then came a heavy fall which made the floor crack—and I heard only the gnashing of teeth and clink of chains.

“Light!” cried the terrible Madoc.

By the flame of the burning coals, which cast a bluish light through the room, I could dimly see the police-officers crouched over the body of a man in his shirt-sleeves; one held him by the

throat, the knees of the other rested upon his chest; Madoc was roughly claspings the handcuffs on his wrists. The man lay as if lifeless, save that from time to time one of his great legs, naked from knee to ankle, was raised, and struck the floor with a convulsive movement. His eyes were starting from their sockets; a blood-stained foam had gathered upon his lips.

Hardly had I lighted the candle when the officers started back with an exclamation :

“ Our dean ! ”

And all three rose to their feet, looking at each other with pale faces.

The bloodshot eye of the assassin turned toward Madoc; his lips moved, but only after several seconds I could hear him murmur :

“ What a dream ! Good God ! what a dream ! ”

Then a sigh, and he lay motionless again.

I drew near to look at him. Yes, it was he, the man who had overtaken us on the road to Heidelberg, and advised us to turn back. Perhaps even then he had a presentiment that we would be the cause of his ruin. Madoc, who had recovered from his surprise, seeing that he did not move, and that a thread of blood was oozing along the dusty floor, bent over him and tore asunder the bosom of his shirt; he had stabbed himself to the heart with his huge knife.

“ Eh ! ” said Madoc, with a sinister smile.
“ Monsieur the dean has cheated the gallows.

He knew where to strike, and has not missed his mark. Do you stay here," he continued to us. "I will go and inform the provost."

I remained with the two police-agents watching the corpse.

By eight o'clock next morning all Heidelberg was electrified with the news. Daniel Van der Berg, dean of the woolen-drapers, possessed of wealth and position such as few enjoyed—who could believe that he had been the terrible assassin?

A hundred different explanations were offered. Some said the rich dean had been a somnambulist, and therefore not responsible for his actions; others, that he had murdered from pure love of blood—he could have had no other motive for such a crime. Perhaps both theories were true. In the somnambulist the will is dead; he is governed by his animal instincts alone, be they pacific or sanguinary; and in Master Daniel Van der Berg, the cruel face, the flat head swollen behind the ears, the green eyes, the long bristling moustache, all proved that he unhappily belonged to the feline family—terrible race, which kills for the pleasure of killing.

“ABRAHAM’S OFFERING.”

I.

THE reputation of Rembrandt was firmly established as early as the year 1646. His admirable engravings had popularized his original and weird style throughout Europe. Each of his works marked a certain progress in art; the admirable harmony of his clare-obscure, the strange contrast of his lights and shadows, and the nocturnal perspective with which he explored mysterious depths, justified the enthusiasm of his numerous admirers.

It would be difficult to follow the successive developments of Rembrandt’s genius. The fact is that the eye of this artist saw things more clearly in the half-tints of twilight than in the full radiance of the midday sun.

Rembrandt had an inborn love for darkness. In his youth he was often found in dingy taverns, where a few old Flemish heads, gathered around a

table, were barely distinguishable in the yellow, uncertain radiance of a solitary oil lamp, or the gray, sickly light that stole in through a single window.

After the death of his wife, Rembrandt withdrew to an old house in Jew Street, at Amsterdam. His family consisted of only a sister, who managed the house affairs, and of a son, some eighteen or twenty years of age, who had not yet chosen a vocation.

The dealers, always on the lookout for his pictures, were frequent visitors at the painter's.

One evening in the month of March, 1656, Rembrandt, whose disposition was serious and thoughtful, displayed an exceptional exuberance of spirits. At supper he indulged his love of pleasantries mainly at the expense of his sister Louise, who, he said, had arrived at an age to marry. She was sixty.

He extolled the virtues of his son Titus, recognizing in him all sorts of excellent qualities of which he had, till then, been ignorant. Finally, he ordered up a pitcher of old porter—a thing he did but rarely—of which he drank more than was his wont.

When ten o'clock struck, and the watchman had disturbed the silence of the night with his lugubrious cry, Rembrandt lighted a lamp and left the room, wishing good night to Louise and Titus.

They heard him cross the vestibule, open the door of his studio, and enter.

This room was very high, and received its light from a single window, which extended from the floor to the ceiling. The window was curtained with red silk, open in the middle, so that it could be drawn aside in both directions. On the walls hung a variety of old arms—casques, battle-axes, poniards, and swords, all well covered with rust.

Rembrandt, with little regard for the traditions of Greece and Italy, called them his “antiques.”

Before his window, on an easel, there was a middle-sized picture. The artist drew forward a chair and sat down, holding the light toward the freshly painted canvas. It was “Abraham’s Offering,” the one of Rembrandt’s masterpieces which ornaments the museum of St. Petersburg.

In the presence of his work, the plebeian face of the painter lighted up with something of the fire of genius.

“Good ! good !” he soliloquized, with a proud smile ; but then his enthusiasm yielded place to a disposition to analyze. His heavy eyebrows slowly approached each other, and he set himself to the examination of every detail of the picture. Now an exclamation of satisfaction would escape him, and now one of dissatisfaction. Suddenly he seized his palette, and seemed about to make

some change ; then he drew back to reflect. His inarticulate mutterings showed plainly that he was not fully satisfied with the execution—that he did not consider it fully up to his high standard.

Meantime, another figure, not less striking in appearance, nor less enthusiastic, had appeared in the half-open doorway, and now looked intently at the picture over Rembrandt's shoulder.

It was the figure of a Jew, such as we see in the pictures of the Flemish artists. Imagine a long, spare body, wrapped in a sort of large plaid, green robe ; a long, misshapen shoe, with large silver buckles, protruded from under the robe, while a pair of bow-legs indicated their knotty joints from beneath. Finally, this green-robed frame was surmounted with an ashen-yellow head wearing a cocked hat, and furrowed by so many wrinkles that it might have been taken for the product of an ancient Egyptian mausoleum. The skin, drawn tightly over the bald head and cheek-bones, shone like ivory. A long nose, sunken lips, and a chin prominent and pointed completed this strange physiognomy. But that which gave him a truly inconceivable intelligence of expression was his look. His large, gray, lynx-like eyes were scarcely less brilliant than luminous bodies as they peered from under his heavy, white brows.

This personage entered the studio, and placed

himself behind the painter so noiselessly that he was unheard as well as unseen.

It was a strange spectacle to see these two figures intently contemplating the same work. In the features of the one could be seen the pride of the artist, but also the severe self-critic. In the features of the other, astonishment and unlimited enthusiasm were equally apparent.

It was evident that the admiration of the Jew surpassed that of the painter. There was adoration in his pose, his gestures, his look.

Suddenly Rembrandt seized a brush, and leaned forward, saying :

“This won’t do ; I must change it.”

But the Jew, impelled by an irresistible impulse, clutched the painter’s arm.

“No, no !” he cried, “don’t touch it. You can’t improve it.”

Startled by this sudden apparition, Rembrandt turned with an expression of surprise ; but, recognizing the dealer Jonas, he burst out laughing.

“Ah, it’s you, Jonas,” said he. “How the dence did you get in here ?”

Without answering the question, the old Jew cried out :

“Master Rembrandt, this is a masterpiece. It is magnificent, sublime ! Oh, the God of Israel performed a miracle in saving the son of Abraham, but this picture is still more marvelous. You

have never reached such perfection, never—you have surpassed yourself!"

"Bah! you always say the same things. According to you, my last picture is always my best."

"It is true," said Jonas. "It is true, Master Rembrandt, you surpass yourself every time; but you are as far as you will ever get—as far as it is possible to go."

"The fact is, Jonas, I might well doubt the judgment of one who knows his own business so badly. Instead of criticising my work, you praise it so highly that—"

"What!" interrupted the Jew; "depreciate a picture such as this! Only a knave or a fool could do it. And, then, don't you know its value just as well as the shrewdest dealer in Amsterdam?"

"True," said Rembrandt, with a suspicion of vanity; "I think I may be very well satisfied with my work, and if the picture were not sold—"

"Eh, what! sold?" cried the Jew. "Sold!—impossible! Sold to whom?"

"To a rich German amateur; the price was fixed in advance."

"The price was fixed!" repeated the Jew; "but what price?"

"A thousand ducats."

"Are you mad! What is a thousand ducats for a masterpiece like that? You will never paint better—perhaps never again as well!"

"Humph !" returned the painter, with a smile.

"One thousand ducats ! I'll give you fifteen hundred for it," continued Jonas.

"Impossible, impossible."

"Two thousand !"

"I tell you the picture is sold, and that I can't let you have it at any price," said Rembrandt, in a tremulous tone, for he loved money.

"Two thousand five hundred ducats !" cried Jonas, sinking into a chair as though he was terrified at his exorbitant offer.

Rembrandt looked at him as though he would assure himself that what he heard was not a dream.

"It is too much, Jonas," said he ; "you would lose."

"Ay, ay, the price is ruinous ; I know it is," groaned the Jew, "I know it is ; but how can I ever allow such a work to go into the hands of another ?"

After a moment's silence the old enthusiast added :

"Master Rembrandt, I have promised to purchase for a rich amateur the next picture that comes from your studio ; my word is pledged."

"I too have pledged my word," said Rembrandt, rising, "and I am as desirous to keep it as you are to keep yours ; besides, the contract is signed."

The Jew rose, and, approaching the artist, took his hand.

"Neighbor," said he, in a tone that was more significant than his words, "I can not offer you more. I have a daughter; you know my little Rebecca. If I were alone in the world, I would offer you more; but I must think of my child. Two thousand five hundred ducats is a large sum of money—an enormous sum for a single picture; but a masterpiece such as this is priceless. Come, tell me how much you want? Is not two thousand five hundred ducats enough? If not, tell me how much will be."

"But, Jonas," said Rembrandt, pointing to a faint outline of a coat of arms on the canvas, "the picture, I tell you, is sold; the contract was long ago executed in duplicate."

"Then the Lord's will be done," groaned the Jew. "I will return to-morrow in the hope of seeing the purchaser, and if he will let me have the picture, I will give him the difference in our prices."

"Your offer will be rejected," said Rembrandt, "for the purchaser of this picture is the Prince of Hesse-Cassel. Another time I hope we shall both be more fortunate, Jonas. I am as sorry as you are that things are as they are. I lose fifteen hundred ducats—a large sum for a poor artist and the father of a family."

They both instinctively turned toward the door, and as they left the studio it would have been difficult to tell which one seemed most chagrined.

“Apropos,” said Rembrandt, as they reached the vestibule, “how did you get in here? I did not hear you.”

“Your sister told me where I would find you,” replied Jonas.

“So, so ; I see,” said the painter.

They separated just as the cathedral clock struck eleven.

Rembrandt crossed a small yard in front of his house. The moon shone in the heavens, pale and meditative. He watched Jonas, as he wended his way down the street, as long as he could see him ; then he closed the street gate, adjusted the bar, loosened two enormous dogs, and reëntered the house, sad and thoughtful.

Rembrandt the miser, Rembrandt the usurer, had lost fifteen hundred ducats !

II.

THE city of Amsterdam could boast at this time of having a remarkable establishment of its kind—the tavern of the Free Soldiers.

It was there that the scions of the better families completed their educations ; it was there that they learned to drink ale and porter, to play at cards, to throw dice, and to formulate an oath after the most approved fashion. But what a magnificent tavern !

It was not one of those miserable public resorts where the voices of the convives are lost in the angles of the walls or are deadened by low ceilings. There, there were no chairs, tables, nor chandeliers—fragile things that offer little resistance to the joyous demonstrations of a gathering of merry-makers. No; the tavern of the Free Soldiers was an immense cellar, whose vaulted ceiling, thirty feet high, supplied the chorus to the bacchanalian songs of its frequenters, and never failed to repeat the refrain.

By a judicious provision of Dame Catherine, the mistress of the establishment, the jugs did service for chairs and the wine-casks for tables, and their solid construction resisted every manner of attack.

The night on which Rembrandt closed his doors with so much care and loosened his dogs in the court-yard, Titus, the exemplary young man whom he eulogized so eloquently at the suppertable, was among the habitués of the famous cellar of the Free Soldiers.

The hour was far advanced, and the tavern was wellnigh deserted. A single group of drinkers still remained, gathered around an enormous wine-cask.

A single lamp placed in the center of the group struggled with the darkness. All the faces around it evinced the liveliest interest in the business of the moment.

The son of Rembrandt, seated in the first circle, seemed to be deeply agitated. In front of him sat a big, ill-looking man, with a rapier lying across his lap, a leather mug in one hand and a plumed hat in the other. It seemed that they were antagonists. They were playing a heavy game, and Titus was losing.

"Seven," said Titus, as he threw the dice on the cask.

All the spectators stretched their necks to see the throw.

"Nine," cried the other.

A profound silence ensued, save the rattling of the dice in the box.

"Ten," said Titus.

"Twelve," cried his adversary.

The excitement among the lookers-on was redoubled. Titus threw his dice-box against the wall and cursed his ill luck.

"So, comrade, you owe me twenty-five ducats," said the ill-looking fellow.

"Well, are you afraid you won't get them?" asked Titus, angrily.

"No—oh no; I know you always pay."

"Thunder and blazes!" cried a burly Dutchman, with a nose like a beet, "Titus pay! He always pays. He paid yesterday, he'll pay to-day, he'll pay to-morrow, and he'll pay all the time. He's the bank-breaker, don't you know he is?"

At this bit of coarse pleasantry they all laughed heartily.

"Van Hopp," cried Titus, "find somebody else to make fun of, if you please."

"I make fun of no one," replied Van Hopp; "I only say that you are on the road to bankruptcy."

"And you," retorted Titus—"you haven't the pluck to risk a single ducat: I defy you!"

"That's possible; but, at any rate, I don't play till I see the money I'm to play against, and you haven't a shilling in your pocket," said Van Hopp.

This reply exasperated Titus, but he managed to control himself.

"Wait for me; I'll soon show you some money to play against. And you, Van Eick, if you wait you shall be paid immediately."

With this he hastened away.

All the convives seated themselves around the wine-cask, relighted their pipes, and awaited the return of young Rembrandt.

"Ho! Dame Catherine," cried Titus's adversary, "some wine!"

The hostess hastened to place a well-filled pitcher on the cask. The cups were refilled. Van Eick threw his arm around the rotund figure of Catherine and imprinted a kiss on her neck. She submitted with little ado; she had her money.

Clouds of smoke rose above the heads of the drinkers. All their coarse, ruddy faces expressed

that content which results from the having one's material wants supplied. Not a word, not a look was exchanged ; the silence lasted a full quarter of an hour. Finally the pipe of the rotund and rubicund Van Hopp went out. He mechanically emptied the bowl, and broke the silence by remarking :

"Do you know I can't understand Master Rembrandt ? It can't be denied that he is a great painter and a man of good sense in most things ; but he allows his son to do strange things. I can't understand it."

Another pause.

After a few seconds, Van Hopp emphasized his remark by adding :

"It is simply inconceivable."

"Titus has lost over three hundred ducats this week," observed a third. "Master Rembrandt must be blind not to see that his son is a fool."

"Bah !" said Van Eick, with a sardonic smile ; "Master Titus is taking his first lessons in the way of the world. When I have given him a few more lessons, you will see him quite presentable. His father understands that, and—"

"His father !" interrupted Van Hopp ; "his father is a miser, and I am sure he does not give him a ducat."

At this moment the door opened, and Titus appeared, with a triumphant air, holding in his hand a well-filled sack of ducats.

"Well, here I am again," said he. "Are you ready?"

He approached Van Eick, and laid a handful of gold down before him.

"Now I owe you nothing. And you, Van Hopp, since you want to see the money, here it is. How much will you stake?"

"All I have about me," was the reply.

Herewith they proceeded to lay their wagers.

The fascination of gaming has something infernal in it. It makes our muscles tremble, our temples throb, our flesh creep. Fear, joy, triumph, despair, terror, and hatred—all the passions are aroused by it; it throws them all into disorder.

Contemplate these faces, which a moment since were immobile, apathetic—these features, which but now were expressionless. They are not the players—they are only spectators; and yet they are a prey to the satanic fascination of the game; it holds them spell-bound in its magic grasp.

An hour later, and Titus's ducats had passed into the pockets of Van Hopp.

III.

TITUS left the tavern humming a familiar air; but, as soon as he was in the street, he gave vent to his feelings in curses and self-reproaches.

“Ten thousand devils seize the whole of you !” he cried, looking back at the door.

He seized his velvet cap as though he would tear it in pieces ; but he replaced it on his head, and burst out laughing.

“Bah !” he exclaimed ; “what is two or three hundred ducats ? Doesn’t Jonas offer to share his purse with me ? Can’t I put my hand into it when I will ? Oh, most noble and generous Jew ! By all the gods, I’ll turn Israelite and marry your pretty daughter.”

Suddenly Titus quickens his pace ; some thought seems all at once to have occurred to him.

The night was dark and the silence profound. Only an occasional star shone through the flying clouds, like the phosphorescent lights that come of the breaking of the waves. His way led him along the bank of a canal, whose muddy water reflected the dark and menacing sky, which reminded him of some of his father’s engravings.

Finally, he turned the corner of the cathedral, whose clock just then struck two, and stopped before a large house, and looked up at one of its windows. It was one of those antique structures that date from the middle ages. The gable-end projected out over the street, and small, symmetrically disposed beams formed part of the wall. In the rear there was a spacious garden.

Titus scaled the inclosure, and made a signal.

Scarcely a minute had elapsed when a small window opened.

"Is it you, mynheer?" inquired a cracked voice.

"Yes, Esther; it is I."

"Very well, very well."

In a moment a key turned in the lock of the street-door, which was opened by a thin, tremulous hand.

"Ah, Mynheer Rembrandt," said the old woman—"ah, you have made us wait a long time. My poor little Rebecca had given up all hope of seeing you to-night. She has been crying for this hour."

Titus mounted the stairs; Esther followed him slowly.

She was a kind old soul, was Esther. She had served Jonas for near half a century. She was so fond of her little Rebecca that she could refuse her nothing. In appearance Esther resembled the Cumæan Sibyl: short, shriveled, and infirm, with little, round, piercing eyes. As for her mouth, it disappeared when her nose and chin completed the formation of a sort of beak.

Titus hastened down a long hall, pushed open a padded door, and found himself in a room with Rebecca.

All that our modern luxury could furnish that is sumptuous and rich would be eclipsed by the splendor of this little boudoir. Imagine an apart-

ment, high, small, and arched *en ogive*; the angles are decorated with beautiful paintings; from the center of the arch a bronze chandelier is suspended by a silver chain. An Indian rug of the most costly fabric covers the floor. Two high Gothic windows, with their brass sashes and colored panes, admit a light that dazzles by the brilliancy of its colors.

Finally, on a luxurious divan reposes *la petite* Rebecca.

Oh, Titus! fortunate young man!

The daughter of Jonas, a veritable Oriental pearl of ideal purity, sighs and waits for the son of Rembrandt. Her elbow resting on the end of the sofa, her head in her hand, her hair hanging loosely about her white shoulders, the poor child has a sad and dejected mien. A tear glistens on her long lashes: the ingrate does not come.

When he suddenly burst into the room, she could not suppress a cry of joy.

“Oh, thank Heaven! at last! at last! But I have waited so, so long!”

The young man, on his knees beside her, winds his arm around her supple form; their eyes meet, their breath and their hair intermingle.

“How beautiful, how lovely you are to-night!” he exclaims.

An hour passes. The lovers take no note of time. They speak in a tone so low that not even the silence is disturbed.

Suddenly the clock of the old cathedral strikes, and its solemn reverberations seem to travel far into the stillness of the night. At the same moment a door opens at the extremity of the passage. Titus trembles with fear, and listens.

Slow, shuffling steps approach the little boudoir. Titus springs toward the chandelier and extinguishes the lights.

Some one stops before the door; the light of a candle shines through the key-hole and forms a star on the opposite wall. Titus hardly dares to breathe. Finally, the nocturnal wanderer continues his way along the passage; the luminous point describes a circle on the wall, and disappears as the steps grow fainter without.

"Who is it?" whispers Titus.

"My father," says Rebecca. "He often goes about the house at night."

Impelled by an irresistible curiosity, Titus opened the door sufficiently to look out. There was Jonas at the end of the hall enveloped in a long gown; in one hand he held a lamp, while with the other he unlocked and opened a heavy oaken door and disappeared, closing the door behind him.

There was something so strange and weird in the old Jew's movements that Titus turned to Rebecca, and asked:

"What is he doing at this hour?"

"I do not know," she replied. "I was quite

small when I heard him the first time going about at night. At first I felt afraid, but I have long since become accustomed to hearing him. He always stops for a moment before my door ; then he goes on down the passage just as he did to-night."

"It is very strange," said Titus. "He never comes in?"

"No, never."

"What is there behind this big oaken door?"

"I do not know ; he always keeps the key. No one ever enters there but himself."

"It is strange, very strange," half soliloquized Titus.

"Very true," said Rebecca ; "but why concern yourself about what you can not fathom ? Come back, and tell me again how much you love me."

"It is better I should go. Your father might discover—"

"No danger. We shall hear nothing more of him for an hour."

She exerted herself to make him prolong his stay, but Titus could not be persuaded. He donned his cap, took a hasty leave of the gentle Rebecca, and found his way to the street as quickly and noiselessly as possible.

IV.

THE next day the Prince of Hesse-Cassel, in order to do honor to the painter, deigned to present himself personally at Rembrandt's.

This Prince was *un homme superbe*; it was only necessary to see his mustache with its cork-screw curl, his white-plumed hat, his embroidered velvet coat, his gold-hilted sword, his silver spurs, his imposing gait, his lordly mien, to be convinced that he was one of those superior beings predestined by their ancient nobility and by the purity of their blood to rule over men.

And Nature, whose ways are ever just as well as beneficent, had placed him at the head of a principality.

Rembrandt came forward to receive him on the very threshold of his modest abode, wearing a suit of coarse blue cloth, a felt hat of the Flemish fashion, while a triumphant smile lighted up his vulgar features.

The Prince's coach had stopped at a little distance from Rembrandt's house.

An attendant, dressed in black, thin as a spindle, his cheeks pale and hollow and his nose pointed, bowing low and smiling obsequiously, followed the Prince. When Rembrandt saw him carrying a long sack, presumably filled with ducats, his avaricious heart would have been over-

joyed had it not been for the magnificent offer he had been compelled to refuse the previous evening.

"Well, maestro," said the Prince, "we come, you see, in person to carry off your picture, 'Abraham's Offering.' It is, I am sure, a conquest worthy of us."

"Monseigneur," said the painter, "no fortress can withstand the assault of a mule loaded with gold."

"Eh, what! do you take our worthy steward for a quadruped?"

"I speak of the sack," said Rembrandt; "the animal is only an accessory."

The steward made a grimace.

"Diable! Rembrandt, you are malicious. Defend yourself, Master Genodet."

"Monseigneur," replied the steward, "I would never presume to speak in the presence of your Highness."

"I believe him," thought the painter; "he would rather steal his ducats in silence."

They entered the studio.

To show his picture to the best advantage, Rembrandt had hung it against the wall, where it would have the most favorable light; and then he had covered it with a green linen cloth, thinking that its effect on the Prince would be heightened when he unveiled it.

"Be so good as to stand here, monseigneur,"

said he. "The picture is there. I will uncover it."

The royal visitor took the position indicated. Then Rembrandt, full of ardor, removed the cloth. But, amazement! the picture had disappeared!

The Prince thought he had been hoaxed, and Rembrandt for a moment or two seemed to question his own sanity; he could hardly believe his eyes—he was utterly confounded. Then, in his semi-delirium, he set to searching every corner of his studio and overturning everything, exclaiming, "My picture! where is my picture?"

"Master Rembrandt," said the Prince, "is this a comedy you are acting? I am not your dupe."

A sardonic smile played about the thin, colorless lips of the steward.

The Prince's insinuation very naturally increased the painter's frenzy.

"Comedy! What! I play comedy! I try to deceive you! I am robbed! My picture has been stolen!"

His cries were such that his sister and Titus hastened to the studio. As they entered he darted toward them.

"Is it you? Have you taken my picture?" he cried, seizing Titus by the collar.

"What picture?" asked Titus.

"Oh, it was you! Who else is there in the

house to do it? I see, I see, my boy—a practical joke, is it not? I forgive you, but tell me quickly where it is.”

“I assure you, father, that I know nothing of your picture, that I have not touched it.”

“Ah! you villain, you deny it, do you?” He was about to deal him a blow, when the sister interposed.

“Why, brother! are you mad?” she cried. “You know he is incapable of taking your picture. What would he do with it?”

“You defend him, do you? Then it was you!”

“I!” said the poor woman, with tears in her eyes. “How can you accuse me of such a thing?”

Rembrandt sank into a chair without adding a word. He was completely overcome.

“Let us be gone,” said the Prince. “This scene is disgusting; it was doubtless rehearsed in some tavern. The picture has been sold. I regret that anything ever induced me to darken the door of this room.”

Without waiting to see or to hear more, his Highness left the house, followed by his obsequious steward.

V.

THE sudden and incomprehensible disappearance of his picture threw Rembrandt into a most unhappy frame of mind.

For a long time he found it impossible to work. At table with Louise and Titus, he would glance first at the one and then at the other with a look full of defiance, and never opened his mouth but to complain of traitors and ingrates.

"Ay, ay," said he, "one thinks he has an affectionate and devoted sister and son ; one gives them his confidence, and what do they prove to be ? his greatest enemies. Great Heaven ! whom can we trust ? The honest man is the prey of villains and thieves. His own family to rob him !"

Poor Louise kept silent. What could be said in reply to one in his mental condition ?

Sometimes Rembrandt, impelled by an indescribable feeling between doubt and fear, would search over and again every nook and corner of his house like a veritable madman. Often also he was seen in the court-yard, walking slowly and gravely to and fro, with his arms folded over his chest, his head inclined forward, and muttering unintelligibly to himself.

When his dogs would come toward him, wagging their tails with pleasure, he would cry out

to them : " Out with you ! You, too, are a couple of traitors ! The thief and you are good friends, I have no doubt, and you would lick his hand as soon as mine."

At eight o'clock each evening Rembrandt closed the portal of his house, adjusted the bar, sent Louise and Titus away, and then, with a long rapier in his hand, remained in ambuscade in the yard until he could keep his eyes open no longer, when he would retire, cursing the weakness of his will because he could not conquer nature.

Nevertheless, despite his fears, his doubts, and suspicions, which amounted to little less than insanity, Rembrandt, after a few weeks, returned to his work, and completed one of his most famous pictures, "The Meditative Philosopher," which is characterized by a melancholy so profound and a sadness so true.

One evening several energetic raps were heard at the portal of the court. The painter went out and asked who was there.

"It is I, Master Rembrandt," replied the voice of Jonas. "What the devil do you close your doors for at such an early hour ? I have something to say to you."

Rembrandt opened the wicket in the portal, and inquired in anything but an encouraging tone :

"Well, what is it ?"

The face of the old Jew presented itself, with its innumerable wrinkles and leather complexion.

"I came to inquire," said he, "if you have not a picture to sell? I have a buyer, if I can find anything that will please him."

"Bring him to me to-morrow," said the painter. "I have just completed a work of imagination."

"The gentleman came to me," said Jonas, "and you understand—"

"Oh, I see; you want a commission. In future I shall sell my pictures myself."

He closed the wicket, and went into the house.

It was thus that Jonas was dismissed, for the humor of the painter, not the most agreeable at the best, had of late been materially soured.

Although he could not work by lamp-light, Rembrandt rarely left his studio in the evening. The neighbors saw a light in this room every night, and often a shadow was outlined on the red silk curtain.

What was the painter doing at these late hours, when the whole town was supposed to be asleep, when a profound stillness reigned in the streets far and near, when the eyes of the cat shine as though she carried a flambeau in her head? At these unwonted hours Rembrandt was still awake. He raises a heavy trap-door in the center of his studio, and descends a few steps. A feverish agitation makes his muscles twitch; his eyes glisten with a supernatural expression. He thrusts his hand

into a deep cavity, and with an effort draws forth an iron casket. His coarse features redden with delight. He raises the cover, and fixes his eyes with a satanic smile on the contents. For a moment the miser is speechless with emotion ; then he grasps a handful of the gold, and chuckles :

“Ha ! ha ! my beauties, are you there ? There’s no deceit in you. You, at least, will never betray me.”

As the miser soliloquized, he picked up handful after handful of coin, and let it slide back into the casket, feasting his avaricious ears on the dull clinking it made.

But suddenly his features undergo an entire change of expression. His eyes are fixed on space, his mouth is wide open, his neck seems elongated, he breathes inaudibly, he listens. A slight noise is heard in the vestibule, then the steps of the stairs creak beneath a rapid step.

Softly and hastily the miser slips the casket back into its resting-place, regains the floor of his studio, and closes the trap behind him. Without giving a moment to reflection, he seizes a poniard that hangs on the wall, and, like a tiger that springs from his cage, he darts into the vestibule, crying :

“Ah, villain ! I have you !”

At this moment a shadow disappears from the head of the stairs as if by enchantment.

Rembrandt is stupefied ; but a thought seizes

him. He runs to his easel—his new picture is gone!

Louise, who had been aroused by a cry of terror and despair that was well-nigh inhuman, quickly arrived on the scene, covered with a cold perspiration, and trembling in every limb. She had recognized the voice of her brother. After this one cry, which seemed to come from the very depths of his being, all was as silent as it had been before; not a sound disturbed the general stillness.

Despite her terror, Louise had had the courage to seek her brother.

She found him leaning against the wall, his feet wide apart, his hands clinched, pale, his eyes open but immovable. He looked like a corpse, except that he was standing, rather than like a live man.

Louise tried to speak, but the spectacle before her paralyzed her tongue; she herself had to seek support to avoid falling.

Little by little Rembrandt came to himself. First a movement, then a heavy sigh. With animation came rage.

"I am robbed again! robbed!" he cried.

"Brother!" entreated Louise; "brother!"

"Is it you?" he asked, glaring at her like a maniac. "You were there?"

"I came when I heard you cry out," she replied.

“And Titus?”

“He is in bed.”

“In bed? We will go and see.”

Rembrandt led the way to his son's chamber. Louise followed.

“Titus!” he called, opening the door.

No response. He drew aside the curtains of the alcove. The bed was empty.

He tore off the pillows, the covering. He could not, it seemed, believe his eyes, and yet to doubt was impossible. There was certainly no Titus there. A smile, a bitter, melancholy smile, curled his lip.

“So, so!” said he, in a concentrated, smothered tone; “now I know the thief.”

Louise made no response, but burst into tears.

VI.

TITUS had passed the night at the tavern of the Free Soldiers. Toward four o'clock in the morning, just as the first faint rays of light began to whiten the tops of the chimneys, our youth, slightly over the bay, wended his way quietly through Jew Street, on his way home. Arrived there, he introduced a skeleton key into the lock of the street-portal and opened it. He expected to be greeted, as usual, by the two dogs, his ac-

complices ; what, therefore, was his astonishment when a heavy, muscular hand seized him by the collar, and the voice of his father cried out :

" Ah, villain ! I have you ! "

He was dragged into the house with such rapidity that he had no time to acknowledge his wrong-doing or to beg for mercy.

Rembrandt and his son, in the center of the studio, looked at each other, face to face, each seemingly marshaling his powers for the contest. Titus was red, and shook with terror ; Rembrandt was pale, and trembled with rage.

For a few seconds they were both silent. The young man felt a sort of chill creep down his back.

" I know, sir," stammered Titus, finally breaking silence, " that I am much in the wrong—that I deserve your reproaches."

" My picture !" screamed the father ; " my picture !—where is my picture ? "

As Titus did not answer immediately, Rembrandt continued :

" My two pictures ! Speak, thief ! Where are they ? What have you done with them ? "

" I don't know, sir, where your pictures are ; I have not touched them," said Titus.

" Where have you been ? Where have you spent the night ? "

" I have been at—at the tavern."

" You have been at the tavern—at the tavern,

eh?" cried Rembrandt. "And you eat, you drink, you play at the tavern, do you not?"

No response.

"Have you nothing to say for yourself? You eat, you drink, you play at the tavern—of course you do, or you would not go there. Where do you get your money?"

Titus hesitated.

"Where and how do you get your money?" howled Rembrandt. "Speak, you rascal! or I'll break every bone in your body."

He raised a big cudgel he had in his hand, and poor Titus felt his flesh creep, so great was his fear; but Rembrandt lowered his arm, and continued:

"I know where you get your money: you steal my pictures and sell them."

"No, sir, I do not steal; I borrow."

"You borrow," cried Rembrandt, with renewed fury—"you borrow! Of whom?"

"Of Jonas," said Titus.

"What! Jonas—a Jew, a usurer! He lends you money! How much? how much?"

"Five hundred ducats." Titus was so terrified that he did not dare to confess but half the sum he had already received from the Jew.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Rembrandt dealt him such a blow with the cudgel that he fell on the floor, exclaiming, "Oh, I am killed!"

But Rembrandt was merciless. He seized him, and dragged him into an adjoining room that had but one window, and that was grated.

"You young gallows-bird!" said he, "tell me where my pictures are, or you shall die of hunger."

He left the room, locking the door securely behind him.

Titus, his back aching from the effects of the blow with the cudgel, remained alone in the little dark room, with no other prospect before him than starvation. What a contrast between now and an hour ago at the tavern of the Free Soldiers!

When Rembrandt returned to the vestibule, he met Louise. The poor woman's eyes were red from weeping, and she seemed to be in a state of nervous bewilderment well calculated to excite commiseration.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"Brother, I can not believe that—"

"See here," interrupted Rembrandt; "I forbid you to criticise my acts, and if you presume to do it, I'll turn you out of doors!"

"But, brother, I don't presume to criticise; I only say—"

"You have nothing to say in the matter," he cried, furiously. "You attend to your house affairs, and let what doesn't concern you alone."

Louise saw that in his present mood remonstrance was useless, and withdrew.

When she had the breakfast prepared, she called her brother.

"I want no breakfast," said he.

"And Titus?"

"He wants none either."

"Nor I," said Louise, and returned to her kitchen.

Toward evening a remarkable scene was enacted.

Titus had the appetite of a cannibal; Rembrandt also, but he abstained from eating. Titus set to shouting out that he was hungry, when his father went to the door of the extemporized prison, and asked :

"Where are my pictures?"

"I am hungry!" was all the reply Titus would make.

"So am I," muttered Rembrandt, in a low tone; "so am I."

At six o'clock Louise announced supper.

"I want no supper," said Rembrandt; but, as he replied, he snuffed the odor of the frying-pan, and involuntarily turned toward the kitchen.

Louise insisted.

"I tell you I'm not hungry. Close the door; the smell of your kitchen is disagreeable."

"And Titus?"

"Titus! Let him tell me where my pictures are, and I'll forgive him."

He spoke in a loud tone, in order that the

prisoner might hear him. In reply, Titus every now and then gave the door a kick, and cried out, "I'm hungry ! I'm hungry !"

"The obstinate young rascal !" said Rembrandt. "We'll see who can hold out the longest."

Despite his anger, the father had determined to subject himself to the same deprivation he imposed on his son. The father suffered, but the miser made the law.

VII.

THE house of Jonas was the scene of an unusual commotion.

Rebecca had waited for Titus till it was very late, and in consequence of her disappointment she had gone to bed in tears.

For several days she had complained of a loss of appetite, of headaches and dizziness, and had been a prey to an indescribable unrest akin to real indisposition. The presence of Titus alone made her forget, for the moment, that she was not in her usual state of buoyant health.

Her symptoms were such that they would have justified the fear that she was threatened with a disorder of some gravity.

On the day of which we speak, Titus having

neglected to make his little visit on the previous evening, the symptoms had assumed an alarming aspect. When old Esther in the morning entered the chamber of her young mistress, she found her pale and feverish; her temples burned, and her general aspect was that of one who is on the eve of being seriously ill.

“Oh dear, oh dear!” she moaned; “I am going to die, I know I am!”

“Die!” remonstrated Esther; “die! Don’t talk that way, my child.”

“Yes, yes, I’m sick, I’m very sick. I have a pain here,” and she put her hand on the pit of her stomach. “I can hardly breathe.”

Esther was frightened, and hastened to notify Jonas, who was at his daughter’s bedside with all possible dispatch. His daughter’s appearance, her moans, and, above all, the tears in her large, dark eyes, filled him with terror. He invoked the aid of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with a fervor that no other circumstance could have inspired.

“Oh, my child, my treasure!” he cried, “what can be the matter with you? Where do you feel pain? Tell me.”

Instead of replying, Rebecca only agitated her arms and dropped her pretty head, while tears glistened beneath her long lashes.

In despair, Jonas hastened out of the house, while Esther prepared a calming potion which

she had been in the habit of administering, for full two generations, as a remedy for every human ailment that had come under her ministration.

But a few moments had elapsed when Jonas reappeared, accompanied by the distinguished Dr. Jerosonimus.

Imagine a man between seventy and eighty years of age, thin, and hard and dry as a post. He wears a long green-silk toga ; the twelve signs of the zodiac are pictured on the wide red border, and **all** the constellations, embroidered in silver, are seen on a sort of mantle he wears. Further, a high, pointed hat rises above the head of the Doctor ; a long white beard, equally pointed, reaches nearly to his waist ; and spectacles of colossal dimensions are adjusted on his thin, pointed nose. Jerosonimus looks over his spectacles, and his little black eyes seem to pierce the very recesses of your heart. Under his arm he carries an ebony box ornamented with gold, a veritable miniature pharmacy. Finally, the stride of this remarkable personage is majestic, his gesture imposing, and his speech sententious.

He placed his box on a marble-topped table, and opened it, displaying innumerable little cases and vials containing elixirs, opiates, and electuaries of every imaginable color.

It was very beautiful, and at sight of this arsenal directed against the long list of maladies, no

one could fail to be convinced that Dr. Jerosonimus was a well, a cistern, an abyss of science.

“Here is hellebore,” he said to Jonas, showing him a little package. “It is one of our surest antidotes for insanity. I myself gathered it on the summit of Mount Himalaya. Here is some of the manna that sustained our ancestors for forty years in the desert; it has every imaginable taste. I received it as a present from a priest of Jerusalem, whose son I cured of the pest. Since the escape from Egypt, it had been transmitted, in a sealed bottle, from father to son, and from male to male by order of primogeniture. Here is an elixir of long life, that I myself compounded of the marrow of an antelope, the gall of a giraffe, and the brain of a sphinx. Here is a water that will cause hair to grow on the soles of the feet; and here—”

“Oh, Doctor Jerosonimus,” interrupted Jonas, “you are a wonderful, a sublime genius. You alone are able to save my Rebecca. Deign to look at the poor child, who lies here suffering from as many pains as you have remedies in your little box.”

This reminded Dr. Jerosonimus of the object of his visit. He turned toward the couch on which Rebecca lay, and, with a grave mien and measured step, he approached her.

“Nature,” said he, “engenders innumerable

ills, but science dominates nature, and lays bare her secrets. My child, give me your hand."

Rebecca obeyed.

The Doctor put the ends of his fingers on her pulse, counted the number of beats, half closed his little black eyes, and seemed to reflect; then, turning toward his patient, he said:

"Your tongue."

She opened her mouth. Jerosonimus adjusted his ponderous spectacles, glanced at the oral cavity she displayed, and then, with an oracular shake of the head, he said:

"Serious, very!"

Meanwhile, Esther and Jonas had exchanged innumerable significant glances. When the Doctor said, "Serious, very!" the Jew raised his hands toward heaven in mute despair.

"Very serious," repeated Jerosonimus; "but we have a remedy—one, and one only. It is fortunate, Mynheer Jonas, that you came for me. I alone am able to penetrate the mystery of this malady."

"Oh, Doctor," cried Jonas, "save my child, and my gratitude shall be testified to the utmost limit of my poor fortune!"

The Doctor ran his eyes over the rich furniture of the room, and smiled. Then he said:

"My child, tell me how you feel."

At this question Rebecca burst into tears.

"I feel," said she, in a childlike tone—"I feel

dizzy ; all the time I want to gape ; sometimes I can hardly breathe ; and when I eat, I feel a kind of nausea."

Jerosonimus's features assumed a peculiar expression. He turned to Jonas, and said :

"I should be glad to be alone with your daughter for a few moments."

As the father hesitated, he pointed to the few locks of white hair that still remained on his now well-nigh sterile scalp.

Jonas and old Esther withdrew, but they remained as near as possible to the door. As soon as the Doctor was alone with his patient, he leaned forward, and, in a confidential tone, asked :

"When did you see him last ?"

"See him ! who ?"

"The young man you are in love with."

"Titus !" said she, astonished. "Do you know Titus ? He didn't come yesterday."

"That's sufficient," said the Doctor.

He turned toward the door and opened it.

"Come in, Jonas ; I have some good news for you. Your daughter is out of danger."

"Ah, Heaven be praised !" cried Jonas.

"Ay, ay, you may rejoice. The Lord said to our father Abraham : 'I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore.'"

At the same time he whispered a few words in

his ear, which caused the aged Hebrew to start as though he had been pricked by a thousand needles. He raised his fist to the Doctor and cried :

"'Tis false ! 'tis false ! How dare you ? My daughter is incapable of—"

"She herself just told me so," said Jerosonimus calmly.

"She told you so ! Impossible !"

Jonas darted toward his daughter, saying :

"Tell me, my child, tell me ! What he says is not true ?"

"What ?" she asked naïvely. "What does Dr. Jerosonimus say ?"

"He says, he says that you have confessed—"

"I have confessed ! I have confessed nothing."

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Jonas, triumphantly. "She has confessed nothing !"

"What !" said the Doctor ; "did you not tell me that a certain young man, one Titus, was the cause—"

"The cause of what ?"

"Of your disorder."

"Good heavens !" exclaimed Rebecca, with the utmost simplicity ; "how could Titus be the cause of my loss of appetite ? It is true that I am very unhappy when he neglects to come to see me."

"When he does not come to see you !" howled Jonas. "He comes to see you ? He comes here ?"

“Why, yes, quite often.”

“Oh, hussy ! hussy !” cried Jonas, tearing his robe. “And you, you old traitress, why did you not tell me ? Why did you allow this ?”

In his fury he seized Esther by the throat as though he would choke her to death.

“But,” cried the old sibyl, struggling to free herself from his grasp, “have you not always said that the son of Master Rembrandt was an excellent young man ?”

“The son of Rembrandt !” cried Jonas—
“the son of Rembrandt ! I see in this the hand of Heaven !”

Without uttering another word, he left the room and the house.

The Doctor, Esther, and Rebecca thought the poor old man was bereft of his senses.

Jonas, with all possible speed, directed his steps toward Jew Street.

At sight of him everybody stopped and wondered. His long legs were taking strides that made them look more like stilts than jointed members of the human body ; his thin, sharp nose never varied the direction in which it pointed ; his sugar-loaf hat was pushed back on the nape of his neck, while his ample dressing-gown fluttered in the wind. He might have reminded one of a stork that was making a futile attempt to rise into the air. His whole appearance, in fact, even to the flowing sleeves of his gown, distended by his long,

bony arms, lent him something of the look of this singular bird.

Jonas did not slacken his pace till he reached the domicile of the Rembrandts.

VIII.

REMBRANDT had said to his son :

"If you do not tell where my pictures are, you shall die of hunger."

This terrible threat bade fair to be executed. For eight and forty hours Titus had not had a mouthful. Stretched out on the floor, pale and haggard, the poor fellow had long since stopped kicking the door ; he could now scarcely stand on his feet.

Rembrandt, seated near the door of the little room, well-nigh as pale and not more vigorous than his prisoner, but as determined as at first, continued to call out from time to time :

"Tell where my pictures are, and you shall have something to eat."

As the only reply he got was the hollow echo of his voice in the vestibule, he rose, listened at the door, and then, looking through the key-hole, muttered :

"He doesn't reply. Perhaps he's dead."

Involuntarily he put his hand to the pocket

in which he had the key ; then he resumed his seat, saying :

“No, I have fasted as long as he has ; he can’t be dead yet. There is no danger. He’s only obstinate.” He leaned back against the wall, closed his eyes, and bit his lips. In a few minutes he continued :

“The rascal ! if he’d only confess, if he’d only tell me where my pictures are, we’d have something to eat. The young brigand ! Oh, he has them, or he has sold them ! Borrow five hundred ducats ! five hundred ducats ! The rascal ! the rascal ! let him starve. I wish it were all over ! This hunger is something terrible.”

Meantime other thoughts came to take possession of the miser. What he suffered enabled him to appreciate the suffering of his son.

What he loved next to his gold was Titus. As we see, his paternal affection forbade his imposing a great deprivation on him without subjecting himself to it at the same time. At those moments when the father was in the ascendancy, he would cry out :

“Titus ! Titus, my boy ! Confess, and I’ll pardon you ! Confess, and we’ll have something to eat, and some porter.”

But, receiving no response, the rage of the miser would be rekindled.

Toward noon a paroxysm of ravenousness seized him. He suddenly sprang to his feet, exclaiming :

"I can stand it no longer!"

Just then the door opened, and Jonas, the exasperated Jonas, stood on the threshold.

At sight of the Jew, to whom he attributed his son's shortcomings, Rembrandt's plebeian physiognomy assumed an expression menacing beyond description. If he had not felt so feeble, he would have made an effort to strangle the old Jew then and there.

Jonas, on his part, was not less furious. His long, yellow, furrowed face was a picture of indignation and despair.

What had just come to his knowledge with regard to his daughter had put him in a frame of mind which the jeers of the people he had passed in the streets had very naturally aggravated.

To see these two men, as they stood for a moment face to face, breathing defiance at each other, the one tall and cadaverous, the other short and stout, one would have been reminded of a battle between a heron and a hawk.

"Master Rembrandt," cried Jonas, "your son is a villain! He has disgraced my daughter, my little Rebecca, an angel of innocence and purity."

"And you," Rembrandt replied, "you old scoundrel, you have been doing what you could to ruin my son. You have been lending him money. The devil take you and your Rebecca, and the sooner the better!"

"I don't come for my money, I don't care for my money," said Jonas, "although I have lent him a thousand ducats."

"A thousand ducats!" howled Rembrandt. "It's false! You have lent him only five hundred."

"Some other time I will prove what I say; but now I come for something else."

Rembrandt was livid with rage.

"A thousand ducats!" he cried; and, despite his weakness, he attempted to seize the Jew, but his strength failed him. He fell back into his chair, repeating, "A thousand ducats! a thousand ducats!"

"I don't care for the money," repeated Jonas, "if your son will consent to embrace the religion of Moses and marry my daughter."

"What!" cried Rembrandt—"what! my son become a Jew! Are you mad, you old vagabond?"

"Your son has compromised my daughter, I say, and—"

Rembrandt uttered a cry of rage that fairly made Jonas tremble.

"Out of my house, you old usurer!" he cried; "out of my house, or I'll tear you in pieces!"

His exasperation seemed to give him all his wonted vigor. He sprang toward the Jew to put his threat into execution. Jonas, in defending himself, retreated to the door. They both cried

out and heaped imprecations on each other's head till they were breathless. Meanwhile the old Jew, though attacked in front, had managed to open the door; and now, standing on the threshold, he raised his long arms, and, in a tone full of solemnity, he cried :

"Master Rembrandt, I, a poor old man, whose gray hairs your son has dishonored—I, the most unhappy of men, who ask of you only what is right and just, and whom you brutally repulse, showing no regard either for my age or my tears—I curse you ! Ay, I curse you to the twentieth generation ! May you be poor, despised, and wretched ! May Dales take up his abode within your doors and devour you !"

So saying, he staggered toward the street, covering his bald head with a flap of his gown, for he had lost his hat in the battle.

Rembrandt, exhausted and bewildered, hastened to the little room in which he had Titus imprisoned and opened the door. Titus, aroused by the noise of the battle, had risen from the floor. His father, without saying a word, seized him by the hand and led him into the vestibule. There he took a loaf of bread from a cupboard, cut it in two, gave him half of it, and then pushed him out of doors, saying :

"Never let me see you again, never ! You have no longer a father—I no longer a son !"

IX.

AT first Titus did not comprehend the extent of his misfortunes. After having taken a few steps along the wall, against which he leaned for support, he sat down on a big stone, and ate the bread his father had given him. Then he went to a fountain at the corner of the street, and quenched his thirst. He was now so much refreshed that he was able to collect his thoughts, and give some form to his confused ideas.

The sudden disappearance of the picture, his father's rage, the punishment he had endured, the appearance of Jonas on the scene, the words exchanged between him and his father, the battle that followed—all this came back to him like the remembrance of a dream that had been forgotten. He also recalled his father's words: "Never let me see you again, never! You have no longer a father—I no longer a son!"

And where go now? What do?

The canal was near. He went to its bank, and seemed to reflect; but the water was black and muddy. He turned away, saying:

"If, now, it were only schiedam or porter, there would be some sense in drowning one's self in it; but in water, and such as that? No!"

He directed his steps mechanically toward the tavern of the Free Soldiers, and found a good-

ly company assembled there : Van Eick, Van Hopp, and several others. They gave him a boisterous welcome, and invited him to drink, to eat, and to play. They gave him a glass, and he seated himself among them, and naïvely recounted what had happened to him since he was last there.

His story being told, he was amazed to see the change that had come over the manner and mien of his joyous comrades. One after another, they turned away from him ; his glass was empty, but none of them seemed to notice it.

"What the devil !" cried Van Eick, in a most offensive tone ; "did anybody ever hear such a ridiculous story as this one you tell us ?"

Titus vowed and protested that his statement was literally true, but they all refused to believe him.

"And then," said Van Hopp, "if Mynheer Titus tells the truth, I think it exceedingly indelicate for him to present himself here, and to accept civilities he is not able to return."

"Very true," said the others ; "his is a way of doing that is new, and that we hope no one else will be inclined to adopt."

Just then Van Eick made a gesture, in response to which Dame Catherine came and took away Titus's glass.

Titus's cheeks burned with shame and rage, and his jaws closed convulsively. What he was compelled to endure now was a thousand times

worse than what he had just endured at the hands of his father. He rose, and with a look of supreme contempt replied :

“ You are ignoble wretches ! You insult me because I have no more money ! ”

“ Quite right,” said Van Hopp, with a coarse laugh ; “ you have more penetration than I thought you had. But, if you take my advice, you will make haste to get out of here ; if you don’t, we’ll thrash your jacket for you to teach you manners.”

Titus was already at the door when this advice was given him. He continued on his way, hastening his steps to get out of hearing as soon as possible of their laughter and low jests.

This time the poor fellow thought seriously of having recourse to the canal, black and muddy as the water was ; but fortunately another thought suddenly occurred to him. As he walked on in a thoughtful mood, he muttered :

“ Jonas has money—any amount of it. My father says he never wants to see me again. If I should return home and be received, which is doubtful, what a life I should have of it ! No more porter, no more schiedam, no more card-playing, no more anything ! I’d sooner swallow the whole canal. By heavens ! I’ll see what I can do with old Jonas. I’ll throw myself at his feet, and declare that the light of Mount Sinai has penetrated my inmost heart.”

Meantime night had come, and, seemingly by

accident, Titus found himself in front of old Jonas's house. He walked round it several times, apparently maturing his course of action, until finally he scaled the garden wall and made the usual signal ; but this time he made it in vain—it called forth no response. Old Esther had doubtless been driven in disgrace from the house.

For fully three hours Titus waited, watched, and debated. The cold, damp night-air gradually added to his discomfort ; he became desperate. All at once he thought he saw a light flit past one of the windows ; but, upon closer inspection, he concluded that it was only a delusion of his dis-tempered imagination, as all the blinds seemed so firmly closed as to preclude the possibility of a ray of light escaping. Weary of waiting, he resolved to try the door. To his surprise, he found it was not fastened. He opened it and entered.

Aglow with joy, he groped his way to the stairs with the view of going directly to Rebecca's boudoir ; but, at the moment he reached the hall of the second story, a door opened at its extreme end, and Jonas, in a long night-robe, a candle in his hand, came directly toward him. Titus's first impulse was to fly ; but he had not the time, for Jonas approached with the air of one in great haste. Titus stood bolt upright against a door and kept perfectly still, in the hope that the old man would pass without noticing him ; but, arrived in front of him, the Jew stopped and fixed his

eyes directly upon him. His lips were firmly closed, and his eyes were wide open, but they were dull and expressionless, like the eyes of the dead.

At sight of him Titus was petrified with horror ; Jonas looked to him like a walking corpse. He would have cried out, but he was unable to utter a sound.

After stopping a moment, Jonas, without speaking a word, or changing the expression of his long, thin face in the slightest degree, continued his nocturnal promenade.

Titus readily comprehended that there was something abnormal in the old Jew's movements, and determined, if possible, to watch him. He therefore followed him closely ; his courage, after taking in the situation, had returned to him. Jonas's long strides soon brought him to the big oaken door ; he opened it, and entered the room into which it led.

To Titus the room seemed like the interior of a church, it was so large and high. Jonas's candle shone in it like a luminous point in space. At the same time, Titus noticed that a strong odor of painting pervaded the place ; and on glancing at the walls, in the uncertain light of the single candle, they seemed to be covered from floor to ceiling with pictures.

On entering the gallery—such the room really was—Jonas went directly to a ladder in one cor-

ner, which he ascended with great agility, though he could use only one hand to steady himself, having his candle in the other. Arrived at the top of the ladder, the old man straightened up, and, reaching out his candle toward the angle under the ceiling, he brought into full view Rembrandt's lost picture, "Abraham's Offering."

Titus, seeing Jonas in this perilous position, bending backward without anything seemingly to prevent his falling, could not refrain from crying out :

"Jonas, Jonas ! what are you doing ? Take care !"

This cry seemed to thrill the old Jew like an electric shock ; he twisted, rather than turned, partly round, extending his hands for support ; as he did so the candle fell from his grasp. The next moment Titus heard a heavy thud followed by a deep groan.

Some days passed.

Jonas's windows remained closed. A death-like silence reigned throughout his spacious residence. The authorities of the good city of Amsterdam, being advised of these facts, ordered an inquiry to be made as to the cause. This resulted, not only in the finding of the Jew's dead body, but also in the discovery of his magnificent gallery of pictures.

But the feature of this discovery that caused

the greatest sensation was the fact that a considerable number of the most remarkable pictures in Jonas's collection were recognized by the artists who painted them, or by dilettanti to whom they had belonged.

They all stated that these paintings had gone out of their possession, some at one time, some at another, in a manner they could never account for.

Among the claimants was Rembrandt, who rejoiced in the recovery of his "Meditating Philosopher" and his "Abraham's Offering."

Titus and Rebecca had flown to Bruges, where they ended their days. Titus became as great a miser as his father. The reception his comrades Van Eick and Van Hopp gave him at the tavern of the Free Soldiers, the last time he was there, taught him the value of money.

THE THREE SOULS.

I.

THE year 1805 was the sixth year I spent at Heidelberg, studying transcendental philosophy. You know what university life is : it is a full existence—the existence of a *grand seigneur*. One rises at midday, smokes his old Ulm pipe, drinks one or two glasses of schnapps ; then one buttons his polonaise up to his chin, adjusts his little Prussian cap above his left ear, and goes leisurely to listen for half an hour to the illustrious Professor Hasenkopf discuss such ideas as he may have selected *a priori* or *a posteriori*. Every one is at liberty to gape, or even to go to sleep, if he so elects.

The lecture over, one repairs to the brewery of “King Gambrinus,” and stretches his legs out under a table. Pretty waitresses, in their black taffeta corsets, hasten to offer rye bread, sausage, ham, and beer. One sings the air of

Schiller's "Robbers"; one drinks, one eats, and is oblivious to the care incident to this mundane existence. This routine you sometimes vary by putting your dog Hector through his paces, or by clasping the waist of Charlotte or Adelgunde, when, perchance, a general *mêlée* follows, in which blows are freely exchanged, tables are overturned, and glasses and chairs are broken. Then the watchman appears on the scene; you are seized, are conducted to the calaboose, where you are compelled to spend the night.

Thus pass the days, the months, and the years.

At Heidelberg one finds unfledged princes, dukes, and barons of high and low degree, and the sons of cobblers, pedagogues, and tradesmen. The young nobles band together, but all the others fraternize on an equal footing.

In 1805 I was thirty-two years old, and my hair and beard already began to be streaked with gray. My liking for beer, tobacco, and sourkrout began to lessen; I felt the necessity of change. As for Hasenkopf, with his discourses on the discursive and the intuitive, the apodeictic and predictive, he had succeeded in filling my head with a veritable *pot pourri*. Not unfrequently I would stretch out my arms, and cry :

"Kasper Zaan ! Kasper Zaan ! it is not good to know too much. Nature no longer has any illusions for you. You may say, with Solomon, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.'"

Such was my frame of mind, when, toward the end of the spring of the year 1805, a terrible event occurred, which taught me that I did not know everything, and that the career of a philosopher is not always strewn with roses.

Among my older comrades there was one Wolfgang Scharf, the most inflexible logician I have ever chanced to meet. Imagine a short, spare man, with hollow sockets, white lashes, red hair cut short all over his head, a close-cropped beard that comes up high on his sunken cheeks, and broad, muscular shoulders, covered with the rags of what was once a handsome garment. To see him slip along the walls, a loaf of bread under his arm, his shoulders thrown forward, and his eyes aglow with a strange light, was to see a picture that would not soon escape from the recollection. And yet my friend Wolfgang thought of nothing but metaphysics. For some five or six years he had lived on nothing but bread and water in a garret of the Old Shambles. Not once during all this time had he found a mug of beer or a glass of wine necessary to stimulate his ardor for science, or an ounce of animal food to give him strength for his sublime meditations. And yet, gaunt and half starved as the poor devil was, I was afraid of him. I say afraid, for, despite his apparent marasmic condition, his osseous frame was endowed with almost superhuman strength. The muscles of his jaws and of his hands pro-

truded beneath the skin like so many rods of iron ; and then, there was something sinister and forbidding in his look that was calculated to excite distrust.

This strange being, in his voluntary isolation, seemed to have preserved for me alone a sentiment akin to friendship. He came to see me from time to time, when, gravely seated in my arm-chair, he would acquaint me, more or less in detail, with his metaphysical lucubrations.

“Kasper,” he asked, in an abrupt tone, “what is the soul?”

And I, glad to have an opportunity to display my erudition, replied with a doctoral air :

“According to Thales, it is a sort of magnet ; according to Plato, a substance which moves of itself ; according to Asclepiades, an excitation of the senses. Anaximander says it is a compound of earth and water ; Empedocles says it is the blood ; Hippocrates, a spirit diffused through the body ; Xenophon, the quintessence of the four elements ; Xenocrates—”

“Good, good !” he interrupted ; “but you—what do you think the soul is ?”

“I ? I say, with Lactantius, that I don’t know. I am by nature an Epicurean. Now, as you know, according to the Epicureans, every conviction comes from the senses. The soul being something beyond the reach of the senses, I can consequently have no opinion with regard to it.”

“Nevertheless, Kasper, we know that very many creatures in the animal kingdom, insects and fishes, for example, are deficient in one or more of the senses. Who knows if we possess all of them?—if there are not others of which we have not even a suspicion?”

“That is possible; but, being in doubt, I will refrain from venturing an opinion.”

“Do you believe, Kasper, that we can know anything we do not learn?”

“Assuredly not. Every science is the product of study and experience.”

“If that be true, how comes it that chickens no sooner leave the shell than they begin to run about and to search for food? How comes it that they discover the hawk, though high above them, and run for safety under the mother’s wings? Do they learn to recognize their enemy while they are in the shell?”

“That is instinct, Wolfgang. All the animals obey certain instincts.”

“Then it seems that instinct consists in knowing what one has never learned?”

“Come, come!” I cried; “you ask me too much.”

He smiled contemptuously, threw the corner of his well-worn mantle over his shoulder, and left me without adding a word.

I looked upon him as being a lunatic, but a lunatic of the most innocent description. Who

would think it possible that a mania for metaphysics could, by any chance, be dangerous ?

This gives a tolerable idea of Scharf's mental and physical condition, when the old vender of *krücheln*,* Catherine Vogel, suddenly disappeared. Catherine, with a basket suspended from her stork-like neck, was wont to present herself, about eleven o'clock, at the brewery of "King Gambrius." The students were in the habit of indulging their love of pleasantry with her, often reminding her of some of her youthful escapades, of which she made no secret, and at the recollection of which she herself laughed heartily.

"Heaven bless us !" she would say, "we were not always fifty years old ; we have had our merry hours in our time. Well, well ! it's all past now. If those happy days could only come again !"

With this she would heave a sigh, which was the usual signal for a general laugh.

Her disappearance was noticed on the third day.

"What in the world can have become of Catherine ? Can she be ill ? It doesn't seem possible ; she was in such excellent spirits the last day she was here."

It was reported that the police were in search of her. As for me, I had no doubt that she had taken a trifle too much schnapps, and as she was going her nightly rounds had fallen into the river.

* German for little cakes.

The next day, as I was on my way from Hasenkopf's lecture to the brewery, I met Wolfgang on the walk in front of the cathedral. The moment he caught sight of me, he hastened toward me with a triumphant air that made him appear quite other than I had ever seen him.

"I was looking for you, Kasper," said he ; "I have been waiting for you for an hour. Come with me : I have triumphed at last !"

His look, his gestures, and the tones of his voice all betrayed great agitation ; and when he seized me by the arm, and dragged me toward Tanners' Place, I was seized, in spite of myself, with an indefinable feeling akin to fear, and yet I had not the courage to resist.

The narrow street that we followed with hasty strides ran back of the cathedral, among a lot of houses as old as Heidelberg. The square roofs, the wooden galleries lumbered up with all manner of household utensils, the exterior flights of stairs with their worm-eaten steps ; the innumerable ragged figures, some half starved and all curious, who leaned out of the windows to gaze at us as though they had never seen our like before ; the long poles extending from one roof to another, hung with dripping hides ; and then the dense smoke that escaped from the pipes that protruded from each story—all this reminded me of a resurrection of the Middle Ages. As the sky was clear, the sun shone here and there on the

dilapidated walls and the motley scene, thereby adding to my emotion by the strangeness of the contrast.

There are moments when we all lose our presence of mind. It never once occurred to me that I should ask Wolfgang whither he was leading me.

After passing the quarter in which nothing was to be seen but misery and wretchedness, we reached an open place in front of the Old Shambles. Suddenly Wolfgang, whose dry, cold hand seemed to be riveted to my wrist, introduced me into an old ruin that stood between the afore-time hay-loft of the *Landwehr* and the storehouse of the slaughter-yard.

"Go on before me," said he.

I coasted a rough wall, at the end of which there was a dilapidated winding staircase, which we ascended, though the accumulation of rubbish on the landings barely left us room to pass.

At every story my comrade would say, impatiently, "Higher! higher!" And yet I would pause, ostensibly to get breath and to examine the peculiar structure of the old ruin, but really to consider the advisability of beating a hasty retreat.

Finally, we arrived at the foot of a ladder, which extended up into a loft. I can not to this day understand how I could be so imprudent as to mount this ladder without pausing to make some

inquiries, or to demand some explanation. It seems that madness is contagious.

Arrived at the top of the ladder, I stepped out on the littered floor, and looked about me. I found myself in an immense garret. In the roof there were three small windows, and in the center of the space there was a small table covered with books and papers. Over our heads there was a complication of small timbers reaching to the ridge-pole, which one instinctively felt ought to be, if it was not, the abiding-place of the bats of the neighborhood. It was impossible to look out, as the windows were some ten or a dozen feet above the floor.

At first I did not notice a low door, and a large air-hole above it, in the wall of the gable-end.

Wolfgang, without saying a word, pushed a box toward me, which did service for him as a chair; and then, taking from a dark corner a large stone pitcher in both hands, he drank deep of its contents, while I looked at him half bewildered.

"We are under the very roof of the old slaughter-house," said he, finally breaking silence and looking at me with a strange smile, as he replaced the pitcher. "The City Council has made an appropriation to build a new one beyond the city limits. I have been here now five years without paying any rent, and during all that

time not a soul has clambered up here to disturb me in my studies."

Then, seating himself on some pieces of wood piled up in one corner, he continued :

"But to come to the question I would discuss with you. Are you sure, Kasper, that we have a soul ?"

"Come now ! come now !" I replied in no very amiable mood ; "if you have brought me all the way up here to talk metaphysics, let me get out at once. When you met me I was just coming from Hasenkopf's lecture, and was on my way to the Gambrinus brewery, where I proposed to refresh my wasted energies with a substantial luncheon and some beer. I have had my usual dose of abstraction for the day, which is quite enough."

"What a material existence some people do lead !" said he, with a disdainful shrug. "You seem to me to live only to eat and drink. Do you know that I have spent days without eating a mouthful from sheer love of science ?"

"Every one to his taste. You can live on syllogisms and abstract speculations, while I must have sausages and March beer."

He had become very pale, and his lips trembled with anger ; but, controlling himself, he replied :

"Well, if you will not answer me, at least do me the favor to listen to my explanations. Every man feels the necessity of appreciation, and I want

you to appreciate me. I want to see you amazed, confounded, by the sublime discovery I have just made. An hour's attention to what has cost me ten years' conscientious study is not too much, I think."

"Very well, go on—I'll listen ; but hurry up."

Again there was a nervous contraction of the muscles of his face that made me more thoughtful. I began seriously to regret my imprudence in clambering up where I was in such company, and put on a graver mien with the view of conciliating the maniac. My attentive air seemed to have the intended effect, for after a moment's silence he resumed :

"You say you are hungry ; very well, here is my loaf of bread and my pitcher of water. Eat and drink, but listen."

"My appetite can wait. Go on—I'm all attention."

He smiled scornfully, and continued :

"That we have a soul has been admitted from the earliest historic times. From the plant to man, every being lives, is animated ; it, therefore, has a soul. Is it necessary to spend five or six years listening to Hasenkopf to reply to me, 'Yes, every organized being has at least one soul' ? But the more perfect the organization, the more complicated it is, and the more numerous the souls. It is herein that animated beings are especially different the one from the other.

The plant has but one soul, the vegetable soul ; its functions are simple ; it obtains nutrition from the air by means of the leaves, from the earth by means of the roots. The animal has two souls : first, the vegetable soul, the functions of which are the same as those of the soul of the plant, providing nutrition by means of the lungs and the intestines, which are veritable vegetables ; second, the animal soul, the special function of which is to supply sensibility, and whose organ is the heart. Finally, man, who till now has embodied terrestrial creation, has three souls : the vegetable soul ; the animal soul, the functions of which are performed as in the brute ; and the human soul, which supplies reason, intelligence. Its organ is the brain. The nearer an animal approaches man in the perfection of its cerebral organization, the more it participates in this third soul. The animals which approach nearest to man in this particular are probably the dog, the elephant, and the horse. Man alone possesses this soul in all its fullness."

Here he paused, and fixed his eyes full upon me. After a moment he asked :

"Well, what have you to say to that ?"

"Humph ! it's a theory like any other ; all it lacks is proof."

At this reply Wolfgang was seized with a sort of maniacal exaltation ; he sprang to his feet, throwing his head back and his hands up.

“Ay, ay! the proof was wanting. That is what for ten years has tortured me; what for ten years has been the cause of my vigils, my sufferings, and privations! For it was on myself, Kasper, on myself that I wanted to experiment at first. Abstinence pressed this sublime conviction more and more upon me, but without my being able to prove its correctness. But, at last, I have it. You yourself shall hear these three souls proclaim themselves; you shall be convinced!”

After this enthusiastic outburst, which nearly chilled my blood, he suddenly relapsed into his wonted mood, and, seating himself at the table, continued.

“The proof is there behind that wall,” said he, calmly, pointing to the gable-end of the building; “you shall see it directly, but first I must acquaint you more fully with the details of my theory. You know the opinion of the ancients with regard to the nature of the souls. In man they recognized four: *caro*, the flesh, a compound of earth and water which death dissolved; *manes*, the apparition that hovers about the tomb (the name comes from *manere*, to remain, to tarry); *umbra*, the shadow, more material than the *manes*, and disappearing after having once returned to its former haunts; and, finally, *spiritus*, the spirit, the immaterial part of us, which ascends to the gods. This classification seemed to me cor-

rect. It was, however, necessary to decompose a human being, in order to establish the distinct existence of the three souls, independent of the flesh. Reason told me that every man, before attaining complete development, must of necessity pass through the existence of the plant or the brute ; in other words, that Pythagoras's theory was the true one, though he was unable to demonstrate it. Well, the solution of the problem has been the study of my life. It was necessary to destroy in myself the three souls successively, and then to reanimate them. I had recourse to the most rigorous abstemiousness. Unfortunately, the human soul, in order to leave the animal soul unfettered, was of necessity the first to succumb. Hunger rendered me incapable of observing myself in the animal state ; physical weakness rendered me incapable of judging fairly. After a great number of fruitless trials on my organization, I became convinced that there was only one way of compassing my object ; namely, to experiment on another. But who would be willing to sacrifice himself to this kind of research ?”

Wolfgang paused. His whole face was aglow with an expression of maniacal enthusiasm. After a moment he added :

“It became necessary for me to have a subject at any price. I determined to experiment *in animam vilem*.”

"Great Heaven!" I thought; "this man is capable of anything."

"Do you understand me?" he asked.

"Perfectly," said I, with a glance at the ladder; "it became necessary for you to have a victim."

"To decompose," he added coldly.

"And have you found one?"

"Yes. I promised that you should hear the three souls. It will, perhaps, be somewhat difficult now; but yesterday you could have heard them, one after the other, howl and moan, entreat and threaten."

My extremities had become suddenly chilled, and as for my face, it seemed to me that all the blood had left it. Wolfgang was impassible. He proceeded to light a lamp, that usually served only to dimly illumine his nocturnal speculations, and, going to the large air-hole in the wall to the left, said to me, as he thrust the lamp into the dark space beyond:

"Come here. Look in here, and listen."

Despite a growing presentiment of evil, and my desire to retreat rather than advance, my curiosity, and the conviction that the wiser course for me was to do his bidding, induced me to approach and look in the direction he pointed. There, by the pale rays of his lamp, I could see nothing but a dark space, extending some twelve or fifteen feet below the level on which

we were standing, and which had no issue, seemingly, except the one leading into the garret. It appeared to me to be one of those out-of-the-way places which the butchers had used as a receptacle for such worn-out fixtures and tackle as were no longer serviceable.

"Look sharp," said Wolfgang, in a low tone. "Don't you see a bunch of old clothes huddled up in the corner yonder? That's old Catherine Wogel, the vender of ginger-snaps, who—"

At this moment he was interrupted by a piercing cry, that sounded very like the cry a cat utters when in distress. At the same time the seeming bunch of rags straightened up, assuming the dim outline of a woman, who ran her hands convulsively over the wall, apparently in search of some opening through which to effect her escape. I, more dead than alive, the cold sweat starting on my forehead, sprang back, and cried :

"Oh, horrible ! horrible !"

"Eh—did you hear?" asked Wolfgang, with the triumphant smile of a demon. "Wasn't that the cry of a cat? Ha, ha, ha! What do you say to that? The old woman, before she became human, was one of the cat species. Now the brute reappears. Oh, hunger, and especially thirst, does wonders!"

The wailing of the poor old woman had ceased, and the madman, having placed his lamp on the table, added, by way of commentary :

“It is now four days since she had any food. I induced her to come here by pretending that I had a demijohn of *kirschwasser* to sell her. When I got her down where you see her, I closed the door on her. Her love of liquor works her destruction. She expiates her inordinate thirst in the interest of science. Ha, ha, ha! The first two or three days the human soul manifested itself with wondrous energy. She implored, supplicated, and protested her innocence, saying she had never done anything to me, and that, in any case, I had no right to be at once her judge and executioner. Then she would become furious and threatening, and overwhelm me with reproaches, calling me villain, wretch, monster, and Heaven knows what all. The third day—that was yesterday, Wednesday—the human soul completely disappeared, and the cat showed her claws at full length. She was hungry; her teeth became long; she began to mew and howl. Fortunately, we are pretty thoroughly isolated; if we were not, the people of the neighborhood would have thought, last night, that there was a regular pitched battle among all the cats of this side of the town. Her cries were enough to chill your blood. And now, do you know what will appear when the brute is exhausted? The vegetable soul will have its turn. That will be the last to perish. It is known that the hair and the nails of the dead continue to grow. There forms

in the interstices of the cranium a sort of human lichen, called *usnea*, which is regarded as a kind of moss, and is supposed to be produced by the animal juices of the brain. Finally, the vegetable soul also will retire. You see, my friend, that the proof of the three souls is complete."

These were the ravings of a madman, and I should have so treated them ; but the cry of old Catherine had penetrated to the very marrow of my bones, and I was no longer master of myself ; I had completely lost my presence of mind. But suddenly emerging from my bewilderment, my indignation knew no bounds. I sprang to my feet, seized the madman by the throat, and dragged him toward the opening in the floor.

"Wretch !" I cried, "by what right do you seize upon a fellow creature to satisfy your maniacal curiosity ? I myself will deliver you into the hands of justice !"

My attack was so sudden and unexpected, and what he had done seemed to him so natural and justifiable, that at first he offered no resistance, and allowed himself to be dragged to the top of the ladder ; but there, turning upon me with the ferocity of a wild beast, he in his turn grasped me by the neck, while his eyes shone with the ferocity of an enraged beast of prey. Despite my utmost endeavor to resist, he thrust me back against the wall with the greatest ease, holding me with one hand, while with the other he slid the bolt of

the door leading to the dark hole. Divining his intention, I exerted myself to the utmost to free myself, but my antagonist seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength. After a short but desperate struggle, I felt myself again lifted from the floor. The next moment, to my horror, I was thrown headlong into the dark hole, while over my head I heard these strange words :

“Thus shall perish the flesh that revolts, and thus triumph the immortal soul !”

I had barely reached the bottom of the place, bruised and breathless, when the heavy door, some fifteen feet above me, closed, shutting out from my eyes the gray and uncertain light of the garret.

II.

As I fell to the bottom of the den, my consternation was such that I did not utter either complaint or remonstrance.

“Kasper,” said I to myself, as I leaned against the wall, calm and resigned, “the question is now whether you shall be devoured by the old woman, or the old woman be devoured by you. Choose ! As for trying to get out of here, it is useless. The maniac has you in his power, and he will be slow to release you. The walls are of

well-laid stone, and the floor of heavy oak planks. No one knows you in the neighborhood, or saw you enter here ; this is, consequently, the last place any one will think of looking for you. It is all over with you in this world ; you have seen the sun for the last time. Your only resource is this Catherine Wogel ; or rather, you are the only resource of each other."

This survey of my situation flashed through my mind with the rapidity of lightning, and gave me an affection of the nerves from which I did not recover for full three years ; and when, at that moment, the pale, cadaverous face of Wolfgang, with his little lamp, appeared at the air-hole, and I, with my hands clasped in a prayerful attitude, attempted to utter an entreaty, I discovered that my efforts resulted only in producing a series of grimaces—not a sound came from my lips. He, as he witnessed my futile endeavor, smiled and muttered, just loud enough for me to hear him :

"Ha, the wretch ! He entreats !"

This was my *coup de grâce*. I fell with my face down, and, in my despair, I should have remained long in this position but for fear of being attacked by the old woman. She, however, as yet had not stirred. Wolfgang had disappeared from the air-hole ; I could hear him in the garret, moving his table and coughing in that dry, hacking way peculiar to dyspeptics. My hearing had suddenly become so acute that the least sound reached

my ears, and made my flesh creep to the very ends of my fingers. I could hear the old woman gape, and, as I turned toward her, I imagined I could see her eyes glaring at me in the dark. At the same time I heard Wolfgang descend the ladder, and counted the steps one by one, until the sound disappeared in the distance. Where did the wretch go ? I know not ; but during the rest of the day and all the following night he did not return. It was not till about eight o'clock in the evening of the following day, when the old woman and I were making the very walls tremble with our cries, that he reappeared on the scene.

I had not closed my eyes. I was no longer either afraid or indignant. I was hungry, I was famished, and I knew that my hunger would increase.

Nevertheless, only faint sounds could be heard in the garret. I ceased my cries, and looked up at the air-hole. Wolfgang lighted his lamp ; he was, doubtless, coming to see me, to speak to me. In this hope, I prepared a touching appeal ; but the light of the lamp disappeared, and no one came.

This was, perhaps, the most terrible moment I experienced. I said to myself that Wolfgang, knowing I was not yet very materially weakened, did not deign to even look at me ; that, in his eyes, I should not become interesting under two or three days, when I would be more dead than alive.

It seemed to me that I could feel my hair grow gray on my head. Finally, my terror and despair became such that I lost consciousness.

Toward midnight I was awakened by a touch. I naturally shrank from it with disgust. At the same time a cat-like cry, or rather mournful wail, chilled my blood, and seemed to make my hair stand on end.

I expected to have a struggle with my poor old fellow sufferer, but her strength was gone ; it was now her fifth day.

I recalled the words of Wolfgang : "When the brute is exhausted, the vegetable soul will have its turn. That is the last to perish. The hair and nails of the dead continue to grow. And then the lichen in the interstices of the cranium" —ugh ! I imagined old Catherine reduced to this condition ; that I could see her moss-covered cranium ; that I was beside her, and that our souls put forth their humid vegetation in silence.

This fantasy took such a powerful hold of my imagination that I no longer felt the gnawings of hunger. In a sitting posture, I pressed myself into one corner, with my eyes wide open, ready to profit by the first ray of light that should present itself.

It was not long before a faint glimmer made the outlines of my surroundings vaguely visible. I looked up. Wolfgang's pale face was at the air-hole. I had never seen it more expressionless.

He seemed to feel neither satisfaction nor remorse ; he simply observed me. If he had laughed, if he had seemed to enjoy his vengeance, I should have had some hope of moving him ; but in the business-like look his features wore there was nothing to encourage me.

We remained for some time thus with our eyes fixed upon each other—I, a prey to that fear with which the victim looks upon his executioner ; he, cold, calm, attentive, as one who contemplates the inert. The insect, transfixed with a needle, which the student observes with a microscope, if it thinks, if it comprehends, is rent by emotions which I that night learned to measure. I was doomed to die to satisfy the curiosity of a maniac. I saw that entreaty would be useless, and remained silent.

After having looked at me attentively for some minutes, seeming content with his observations, the monster turned his attention to old Catherine. I looked mechanically in her direction also. What I saw can not be pictured by human tongue. The skin of her face looked as though it was glued to the bones, and her limbs were so emaciated that they seemed ready to pierce the rags that covered them. But for the feverish glare of her eyes, she would have had the appearance of being dead. To add to the repulsiveness of the picture, there were two snails that had crawled up nearly to the elbow of one of her bare arms.

The sight was more than I could bear. I closed my eyes convulsively, saying to myself :

“A day or two, and my condition will be like hers !”

When I opened my eyes, the lamp was gone.

“Wolfgang,” I cried, “God is above us all ! Wolfgang !”

As I feared, my cries elicited no response.

After again spending some hours in thinking, as best I could in the condition I was in, of my chances of escape, and again coming to the conclusion that I had none, I suddenly determined to die, and this resolution gave me a little calm.

I rehearsed the arguments of Hasenkopf relative to the immortality of the soul, and for the first time I found them incontrovertible.

“Yes, our sojourn in this world,” said I, “is only a period of probation. Injustice, cupidity, and evil passions dominate the heart of man. The feeble are crushed by the strong, the poor by the rich. Virtue in this world is a delusion, but in the next everything finds its true place and proper level. God sees the wrong of which I am the victim, and will recompense me for the suffering I endure ; He will pardon me my inordinate appetites and excessive love of good living. Before admitting me among the elect, He wishes to purify and chasten me by a rigorous fast. I resign myself entirely into His hands,” etc., etc.

Nevertheless, to be strictly truthful, I must

confess that, despite my profound contrition, my regrets for the brewery and my joyous comrades, for the careless existence which is cheered by good wine and the merry song, made me heave many a long sigh. I could hear the crepitation of the frying, the gurgling of the bottles, the clinking of the glasses, and my stomach yearned and lamented in a manner that showed it was as yet far from being weaned from the world. It seemed in some sort to form an independent being in my organization, and to protest with much earnestness against the Hasenkopf philosophy.

The worst of my sufferings was my thirst. It was so hard to bear that I sucked the saltpeter of the wall to refresh myself.

When the day, of which I could get a faint glimpse, reappeared, I had a paroxysm of rage which knew no bounds.

"The monster is there," said I; "he has his loaf of bread and his big pitcher of water!"

Then I imagined him lifting the pitcher to his lips; it seemed to me that I could see torrents of water passing slowly down his throat. Oh, the wretch! Rage and despair took entire possession of me, and I strode about my dungeon, crying:

"Water! water! water!"

And old Catherine, from her corner, in a faint but agonizing tone, repeated after me:

"Water! water! water!"

In the midst of this scene Wolfgang's sallow

face appeared at the air-hole for the third time. It was about eight o'clock. Seeing him, I stopped, and said :

"Wolfgang, look here : starve me to death if you will, but give me some water. Let me drink from your pitcher, and then, do what you will, I will not reproach you."

I paused for a reply, but not a syllable did he utter, whereupon I continued :

"What you are doing, however, is too cruel. You will have to answer for it before your God. With the old woman here it is a different matter. But I—I am your equal ; I, too, am a student, and find your system very beautiful. I am capable of comprehending and appreciating you. Give me a swallow of water—do ! Yours is the most sublime conception that ever was seen. It is quite certain that there are three souls. I ask nothing better than to be able to proclaim it. I shall be your most firm adherent. But come—are you not going to let me have just one swallow of water ?"

The wretch ! without deigning a word in reply, he withdrew.

My exasperation now knew no bounds. I threw myself against the wall with such violence that it is strange I did not break my bones.

In the midst of my fury I suddenly noticed that old Catherine had sunk down, seemingly more exhausted than ever, and the idea came

upon me to drink her blood. Extreme necessity prompts men to do things the bare thought of which at other times brings a shudder ; it develops in us the ferocity of the beast, and every sentiment of humanity and justice disappears before the instinct of self-preservation.

Red flames flitted before my eyes. Fortunately, as I bent down to the old woman, my strength failed me, and I fell, with my face buried in her rags, unconscious.

How long I remained in this condition I know not, but I was aroused from it in a singular manner, the recollection of which will for ever remain impressed upon my memory. I was aroused by what seemed to me to be the howling of a dog. This howling was feeble, but so plaintive and touching that one could not hear it without being moved. I raised myself up, wondering whence came complaints so much in harmony with my own condition. I listened, and judge of my astonishment when I discovered that it was my own involuntary moans and groans that I heard.

From this moment all recollection is effaced from my memory. What is certain, however, is that I remained for two days more in confinement under the eye of the maniac, whose enthusiasm on seeing his ideas triumph was such that he did not hesitate to invite several of our philosophers to his garret, in order to witness their astonishment and enjoy their admiration.

Six weeks afterward, I awoke in a little chamber in Saint Agatha Street, surrounded by a number of my friends, who congratulated me on having escaped with my life from the effects of this lesson in transcendental philosophy. When Louis Bremer brought me a mirror, and I saw myself, thinner than was Lazarus when he came out of the tomb, I could not keep back my tears.

Poor Catherine Wogel had given up the ghost. As for me, I narrowly escaped having a chronic gastritis for life ; but, thanks to an excellent constitution, and above all to the care of my good friend Dr. Killian, I in a few months became as robust as ever.

It is hardly necessary to add that state authority laid a heavy hand on Wolfgang ; but, instead of being hanged, he was, after long proceedings, placed in an asylum for the insane. There he still discourses on his theory of the three souls, and rails at the ingratitude of mankind, insisting that, if justice were done, monuments would be erected to commemorate his magnificent discovery.

THE INVISIBLE EYE.

I.

ABOUT this time (said Christian), poor as a church-mouse, I took refuge in the roof of an old house in Minnesänger Street, Nuremberg, and made my nest in the corner of the garret.

I was compelled to walk over my straw bed to reach the window, but this window was in the gable-end, and the view from it was magnificent, both town and country being spread out before me.

I could see the cats walking gravely in the gutters; the storks, their beaks filled with frogs, carrying nourishment to their ravenous brood; the pigeons springing from their cotes, their tails spread like fans, hovering over the streets.

In the evening, when the bells called the world to the Angelus, with my elbows upon the edge of the roof, I listened to their melancholy chimes; I watched the windows as, one by one, they were lighted up; the good burghers smoking their

pipes on the sidewalks ; the young girls, in their red skirts, with their pitchers under their arms, laughing and chatting around the fountain of Saint Sebalt. Insensibly all this faded away, the bats commenced their rapid course, and I retired to my mattress in sweet peace and tranquillity.

The old curiosity-seller, Toubac, knew the way to my little lodging as well as I did, and was not afraid to climb the ladder. Every week his ugly head, adorned with a reddish cap, raised the trap-door, his fingers grasped the ledge, and he cried out, in a nasal tone :

“Well, well, Master Christian, have you anything ?”

To which I replied :

“Come in. Why in the devil don’t you come in ? I am just finishing a little landscape, and you must tell me what you think of it.”

Then his great back, seeming to elongate, grew up even to the roof, and the good man laughed silently.

I must do justice to Toubac : he never haggled with me about prices ; he bought all my paintings at fifteen florins, one with the other, and sold them again for forty each. “This was an honest Jew !”

I began to grow fond of this mode of existence, and to find new charms in it day by day.

Just at this time the city of Nuremberg was agitated by a strange and mysterious event. Not

far from my dormer-window, a little to the left, stood the inn "Fat Ox," an old *auberge* much patronized throughout the country. Three or four wagons, filled with sacks or casks, were always drawn up before the door, where the rustic drivers were in the habit of stopping, on their way to the market, to take their morning draught of wine.

The gable-end of the inn was distinguished by its peculiar form. It was very narrow, pointed, and, on two sides, cut in teeth, like a saw. The carvings were strangely grotesque, interwoven and ornamenting the cornices and surrounding the windows. But the most remarkable fact was, that the house opposite reproduced exactly the same sculptures, the same ornaments; even the sign-board, with its post and spiral of iron, was exactly copied.

One might have thought that these two ancient houses reflected each other. Behind the inn, however, was a grand old oak, whose somber leaves darkened the stones of the roof, while the other house stood out in bold relief against the sky. To complete the description, this old building was as silent and dreary as the inn Fat Ox was noisy and animated.

On one side, a crowd of merry drinkers were continually entering in and going out, singing, tripping, cracking their whips; on the other, profound silence reigned.

Perhaps, once or twice during the day, the heavy door seemed to open of itself, to allow a little old woman to go out, with her back almost in a semicircle, her dress fitting tight about her hips, an enormous basket on her arm, and her hand contracted against her breast.

It seemed to me that I saw at a glance, as I looked upon her, a whole existence of good works and pious meditations.

The physiognomy of this old woman had struck me more than once ; her little green eyes, long, thin nose, the immense bouquets of flowers on her shawl, which must have been at least a hundred years old, the withered smile which puckered her cheeks into a cockade, the lace of her bonnet falling down to her eyebrows—all this was fantastic, and interested me much. Why did this old woman live in this great deserted house ? I wished to explore the mystery.

One day, as I paused in the street and followed her with my eyes, she turned suddenly and gave me a look, the horrible expression of which I know not how to paint, made three or four hideous grimaces, and then, letting her palsied head fall upon her breast, drew her great shawl closely around her, and advanced slowly to the heavy door, behind which I saw her disappear.

“She’s an old fool !” I said to myself, in a sort of stupor. My faith ! it was the height of folly in me to be interested in her.

However, I would like to see her grimace again ; old Toubac would willingly give me fifteen florins if I could paint it for him.

I must confess that these pleasantries of mine did not entirely reassure me.

The hideous glance which the old shrew had given me pursued me everywhere. More than once, while climbing the almost perpendicular ladder to my loft, feeling my clothing caught on some point, I trembled from head to foot, imagining that the old wretch was hanging to the tails of my coat, in order to destroy me.

Toubac, to whom I related this adventure, was far from laughing at it ; indeed, he assumed a grave and solemn air.

“Master Christian,” said he, “if the old woman wants you, take care ! Her teeth are small, pointed, and of marvelous whiteness, and that is not natural at her age. She has an ‘evil eye.’ Children flee from her, and the people of Nuremberg call her ‘Fledermaus.’”

I admired the clear, sagacious intellect of the Jew, and his words gave me cause for reflection.

Several weeks passed away, during which I often encountered Fledermaus (bat) without any alarming consequences. My fears were dissipated, and I thought of her no more.

But an evening came during which, while sleeping very soundly, I was awakened by a strange harmony. It was a kind of vibration, so sweet,

so melodious, that the whispering of the breeze among the leaves can give but a faint idea of its charm.

For a long time I listened intently, with my eyes wide open, and holding my breath, so as not to lose a note. At last I looked toward the window, and saw two wings fluttering against the glass. I thought, at first, that it was a bat, caught in my room ; but, the moon rising at that instant, I saw the wings of a magnificent butterfly of the night delineated upon her shining disk. Their vibrations were often so rapid that they could not be distinguished ; then they reposed, extended upon the glass, and their frail fibers were again brought to view.

This misty apparition, coming in the midst of the universal silence, opened my heart to all sweet emotions. It seemed to me that an airy sylph, touched with a sense of my solitude, had come to visit me, and this idea melted me almost to tears.

“Be tranquil, sweet captive, be tranquil,” said I ; “your confidence shall not be abused. I will not keep you against your will. Return to heaven and to liberty.” I then opened my little window. The night was calm, and millions of stars were glittering in the sky. For a moment I contemplated this sublime spectacle, and words of prayer and praise came naturally to my lips ; but, judge of my amazement when, lowering my eyes,

I saw a man hanging from the cross-beam of the sign of the Fat Ox, his hair disheveled, his arms stiff, his legs elongated to a point, and casting their gigantic shadows down to the street !

The immobility of this figure under the moon's rays was terrible. I felt my tongue freezing, my teeth clinched. I was about to cry out in terror, when, by some incomprehensible, mysterious attraction, my glance fell below, and I distinguished confusedly the old woman crouched at her window in the midst of dark shadows, and contemplating the dead man with an air of diabolic satisfaction.

Then I had a vertigo of terror. All my strength abandoned me, and, retreating to the wall of my loft, I sank down and became insensible.

I do not know how long this sleep of death continued. When restored to consciousness, I saw that it was broad day. The mists of the night had penetrated to my garret, and deposited their fresh dew upon my hair, and the confused murmurs of the street ascended to my little lodging. I looked without. The burgomaster and his secretary were stationed at the door of the inn, and remained there a long time ; crowds of people came and went, and paused to look in, then recommenced their course. The good women of the neighborhood who were sweeping before their doors looked on from afar, and talked gravely with each other.

At last, a litter, and upon this litter a body covered with a linen cloth, issued from the inn, carried by two men. They descended to the street, and the children on their way to school ran behind them.

All the people drew back as they advanced.

The window opposite was still open ; the end of a rope floated from a cross-beam.

I had not dreamed. I had, indeed, seen the butterfly of the night ; I had seen the man hanging, and I had seen Fledermaus.

That day Toubac made me a visit, and, as his great nose appeared on a level with the floor, he exclaimed :

“Master Christian, have you nothing to sell ?”

I did not hear him. I was seated upon my one chair, my hands clasped upon my knees, and my eyes fixed before me.

Toubac, surprised at my inattention, repeated in a louder voice :

“Master Christian, Master Christian !” Then, striding over the sill, he advanced and struck me on the shoulder.

“Well, well, what is the matter now ?”

“Ah, is that you, Toubac ?”

“Eh, parbleu ! I rather think so. Are you ill ?”

“No ; I am only thinking.”

“What in the devil are you thinking about ?”

“Of the man who was hanged.”

“Oh, oh !” cried the curiosity-vender. “You have seen him, then ? The poor boy ! What a singular history ! The third in the same place.”

“How—the third ?”

“Ah, yes ! I ought to have warned you ; but it is not too late. There will certainly be a fourth, who will follow the example of the others. *Il n’y a que le premier pas qui coûte.*”

Saying this, Toubac took a seat on the corner of my trunk, struck his match-box, lighted his pipe, and blew three or four powerful whiffs of smoke, with a meditative air.

“My faith,” said he, “I am not fearful ; but, if I had full permission to pass the night in that chamber, I should much prefer to sleep elsewhere.

“Listen, Master Christian. Nine or ten months ago a good man of Tübingen, wholesale dealer in furs, dismounted at the inn Fat Ox. He called for supper ; he ate well, he drank well, and was finally conducted to that room in the third story—it is called the Green Room. Well, the next morning he was found hanging to the cross-beam of the sign-board.

“Well, that might do *for once* ; nothing could be said. Every proper investigation was made, and the stranger was buried at the bottom of the garden. But, look you, about six months afterward a brave soldier from Neustadt arrived ; he had received his final discharge, and was rejoicing in the thought of returning to his native village.

During the whole evening, while emptying his wine-cups, he spoke fondly of his little cousin who was waiting to marry him. At last, this big fellow was conducted to his room—the Green Room ; and, the same night, the watchman, passing down the street Minnesänger, perceived something hanging to the cross-beam ; he raised his lantern, and lo ! it was the soldier, with his final discharge in a bow on his left hip, and his hands gathered up to the seam of his pantaloons, as if on parade.

“ ‘Truth to say, this is extraordinary,’ cried the burgomaster ; ‘the devil’s to pay.’ Well, the chamber was much visited ; the walls were replastered ; and the dead man was sent home to Neustadt.

“ ‘The registrar wrote this marginal note :

“ ‘Died of apoplexy.’

“ ‘All Nuremberg was enraged against the inn-keeper. There were many, indeed, who wished to force him to take down his iron cross-beam, under the pretext that it inspired people with dangerous ideas ; but you may well believe that old Nichel Schmidt would not lend his ear to this proposition.

“ ‘This cross-beam,’ said he, ‘was placed here by my great-grandfather ; it has borne the sign of the Fat Ox a hundred and fifty years, from father to son ; it harms no one, not even the hay-wagons which pass beneath, for it is thirty feet above

them. Those who don't like it can turn their heads aside and not see it.'

"Well, gradually the town calmed down, and during several months no new event agitated it. Unhappily, a student of Heidelberg, returning to the university, stopped day before yesterday at the Fat Ox, and asked for lodging. He was the son of a minister of the Gospel.

"How could any one suppose that the son of a pastor could conceive the idea of hanging himself on the cross-beam of a sign-board, because a fur-dealer and an old soldier had done so? We must admit, Master Christian, that the thing was not probable; these reasons would not have seemed sufficient to myself or to you."

"Enough, enough!" I exclaimed; "this is too horrible! I see a frightful mystery involved in all this. It is not the cross-beam; it is not the room—"

"What! Do you suspect the innkeeper, the most honest man in the world, and belonging to one of the oldest families in Nuremberg?"

"No, no; may God preserve me from indulging in unjust suspicions! but there is an abyss before me, into which I scarcely dare glance."

"You are right," said Toubac, astonished at the violence of my excitement. "We will speak of other things. Apropos, Master Christian, where is our landscape of 'Saint Odilia'?"

This question brought me back to the world

of realities. I showed the old man the painting I had just completed. The affair was soon concluded, and Toubac, well satisfied, descended the ladder, entreating me to think no more of the student of Heidelberg.

I would gladly have followed my good friend's counsel ; but when the devil once mixes himself up in our concerns, it is not easy to disembarrass ourselves of him.

In my solitary hours, all these events were reproduced with frightful distinctness in my mind.

"This old wretch," I said to myself, "is the cause of all ; she alone has conceived these crimes, and has consummated them. But by what means ? Has she had recourse to cunning alone, or has she obtained the intervention of invisible powers ?" I walked to and fro in my retreat. An inward voice cried out : "It is not in vain that Providence permitted you to see Fledermaus contemplating the agonies of her victim. It is not in vain that the soul of the poor young man came in the form of a butterfly of the night to awaken you. No, no ; all this was not accidental, Christian. Heaven imposes upon you a terrible mission. If you do not accomplish it, tremble lest you fall yourself into the hands of the old murderess ! Perhaps at this moment she is preparing her snares in the darkness."

During several days these hideous images followed me without intermission. I lost my sleep ;

it was impossible for me to do anything ; my brush fell from my hand ; and, horrible to confess, I found myself sometimes gazing at the cross-beam with a sort of complacency. At last I could endure it no longer, and one evening I descended the ladder, and hid myself behind the door of Fledermaus, hoping to surprise her fatal secret.

From that time no day passed in which I was not *en route*, following the old wretch, watching, spying, never losing sight of her ; but she was so cunning, had a scent so subtile, that, without even turning her head, she knew I was behind her.

However, she feigned not to perceive this ; she went to the market, to the butcher's, like any good, simple woman, only hastening her steps, and murmuring confused words.

At the close of the month I saw that it was impossible for me to attain my object in this way, and this conviction made me inexpressibly sad.

"What can I do ?" I said to myself. "The old woman divines my plans ; she is on her guard ; every hope abandons me. Ah ! old hag, you think you already see me at the end of your rope." I was continually asking myself this question : "What can I do ? what can I do ?" At last a luminous idea struck me. My chamber overlooked the house of Fledermaus ; but there was no window on this side. I adroitly raised a slate, and no pen could paint my joy when the whole an-

cient building was thus exposed to me. "At last, I have you!" I exclaimed; "you can not escape me now; from here I can see all that passes—your goings, your comings, your arts and snares. You will not suspect this invisible eye—this watchful eye, which will surprise crime at the moment it blooms. Oh, Justice, Justice! She marches slowly, but she arrives."

Nothing could be more sinister than the den now spread out before me: a great court-yard, the large slabs of which were covered with moss; in one corner, a well, whose stagnant waters you shuddered to look upon; a stairway covered with old shells; at the farther end a gallery, with wooden balustrade, and hanging upon it some old linen and the tick of an old straw mattress. On the first floor, to the left, the stone covering of a common sewer indicated the kitchen; to the right, the lofty windows of the building looked out upon the street; then a few pots of dried, withered flowers—all was cracked, somber, moist. Only one or two hours during the day could the sun penetrate this loathsome spot; after that, the shadows took possession; then the sunshine fell upon the crazy walls, the worm-eaten balcony, the dull and tarnished glass, and upon the whirlwind of atoms floating in its golden rays, disturbed by no breath of air.

I had scarcely finished these observations and reflections, when the old woman entered, having

just returned from market. I heard the grating of her heavy door. Then she appeared with her basket. She seemed fatigued—almost out of breath. The lace of her bonnet fell to her nose. With one hand she grasped the baluster, and ascended the stairs.

The heat was intolerable, suffocating ; it was precisely one of those days in which all insects—crickets, spiders, mosquitoes, etc.—make old ruins resound with their strange songs.

Fledermaus crossed the gallery slowly, like an old ferret who feels at home. She remained more than a quarter of an hour in the kitchen, then returned, spread out her linen, took the broom, and brushed away some blades of straw on the floor. At last she raised her head, and turned her little green eyes in every direction, searching, investigating carefully.

Could she, by some strange intuition, suspect anything ? I do not know ; but I gently lowered the slate, and gave up my watch for the day.

In the morning Fledermaus seemed to be reassured. One angle of light fell upon the gallery. In passing, she caught a fly on the wing, and presented it delicately to a spider established in a corner of the roof. This spider was so bloated that, notwithstanding the distance, I saw it descend from round to round, then glide along a fine web like a drop of venom, seize its prey from the hands of the old shrew, and remount rapidly.

Fledermaus looked at it very attentively, with her eyes half closed ; then sneezed, and said to herself, in a jeering tone, " God bless you, beautiful one ; God bless you ! "

I watched during six weeks, and could discover nothing concerning the power of Fledermaus. Sometimes, seated upon a stool, she peeled her potatoes, then hung out her linen upon the balustrade.

Sometimes I saw her spinning ; but she never sang, as good, kind old women are accustomed to do, their trembling voices mingling well with the humming of the wheel.

Profound silence always reigned around her ; she had no cat—that cherished associate of old women ; not even a sparrow came to rest under her roof. It seemed as if all animated nature shrank from her glance. The bloated spider alone took delight in her society.

I can not now conceive how my patience could endure those long hours of observation. Nothing escaped me ; nothing was matter of indifference. At the slightest sound I raised my slate ; my curiosity was without limit, insatiable.

Toubac complained greatly.

" Master Christian," said he, " how the deuce do you pass your time ? Formerly you painted something for me every week ; now you do not finish a piece once a month. Oh, you painters ! ' Lazy as a painter ' is a good, wise proverb. As

soon as you have a few kreutzers in possession, you put your hands in your pockets and go to sleep !”

I confess that I began to lose courage. I had watched, spied, and discovered nothing. I said to myself that the old woman could not be so dangerous as I had supposed ; that I had perhaps done her injustice by my suspicions ; in short, I began to make excuses for her. One lovely afternoon, with my eye fixed at my post of observation, I abandoned myself to these benevolent reflections, when suddenly the scene changed. Fledermaus passed through the gallery with the rapidity of lightning. She was no longer the same person ; she was erect, her jaws were clinched, her glance fixed, her neck extended ; she walked with grand strides, her gray locks floating behind her.

“At last,” I said to myself, “something is coming ; attention !” But, alas ! the shadows of evening descended upon the old building, the noises of the city expired, and silence prevailed.

Fatigued and disappointed, I lay down upon my bed, when, casting my eyes toward my dormer-window, I saw the room opposite illuminated. So ! a traveler occupied the Green Room, so fatal to strangers.

Now all my fears were reawakened ; the agitation of Fledermaus was explained—she scented a new victim.

No sleep for me that night ; the rustling of the straw, the nibbling of the mice under the floor, gave me nervous chills. I rose and leaned out of the window ; I listened. The light in the room opposite was extinguished. In one of those moments of poignant anxiety, I can not say if it was illusion or reality, I thought I saw the old wretch also watching and listening.

The night passed, and the gray dawn came to my windows ; by degrees the noise and movements in the street ascended to my loft. Harassed by fatigue and emotion, I fell asleep ; but my slumber was short, and by eight o'clock I had resumed my post of observation.

It seemed as if the night had been as disturbed and tempestuous to Fledermaus as to myself. When she opened the door of the gallery, I saw that a livid pallor covered her cheeks and thin throat ; she had only her chemise and a woolen skirt ; a few locks of reddish-gray hair fell on her shoulders. She looked toward my hiding-place with a dreamy, abstracted air, but she saw nothing ; she was thinking of other things.

Suddenly she descended, leaving her old shoes at the bottom of the steps. "Without doubt," thought I, "she is going to see if the door below is well fastened."

I saw her remount hastily, springing up three or four steps at a time : it was terrible.

She rushed into the neighboring chamber, and

I heard something like the falling of the top of a great chest ; then Fledermaus appeared upon the gallery, dragging a manikin after her, and this manikin was clothed like the Heidelberg student.

With surprising dexterity, the old woman suspended this hideous object to a beam of the shed, then descended rapidly to the court-yard to contemplate it. A burst of sardonic laughter escaped from her lips ; she remounted, then descended again like a maniac, and each time uttered new cries and new bursts of laughter.

A noise was heard near the door, and the old woman bounded forward, unhooked the manikin, and carried it off ; then, leaning over the balustrade, with her throat elongated, her eyes flashing, she listened earnestly. The noise was lost in the distance ; the muscles of her face relaxed, and she drew long breaths. It was only a carriage which had passed.

The old wretch had been frightened.

She now returned to the room, and I heard the chest close. This strange scene confounded all my ideas. What did this manikin signify ? I became more than ever attentive.

Fledermaus now left the house with her basket on her arm. I followed her with my eyes till she turned the corner of the street. She had reassumed the air of a trembling old woman, took short steps, and from time to time turned her

head partly around, to peer behind from the corner of her eye.

Fledermaus was absent fully five hours. For myself, I went, I came, I meditated. The time seemed insupportable. The sun heated the slate of the roof, and scorched my brain.

Now I saw, at the window, the good man who occupied the fatal Green Chamber. He was a brave peasant of Nassau, with a large three-cornered hat, a scarlet vest, and a laughing face ; he smoked his pipe of Ulm tranquilly, and seemed to fear no evil.

I felt a strong desire to cry out to him : “ Good man, be on your guard ! Do not allow yourself to be entrapped by the old wretch ; distrust yourself ! ” But he would not have comprehended me. Toward two o’clock Fledermaus returned. The noise of her door resounded through the vestibule. Then alone, all alone, she entered the yard, and seated herself on the interior step of the stairway ; she put down her basket before her, and drew out first some packets of herbs, then vegetables, then a red vest, then a three-cornered hat, a coat of brown velvet, pants of plush, and coarse woollen hose—the complete costume of the peasant from Nassau.

For a moment I felt stunned ; then flames passed before my eyes.

I recollected those precipices which entice with an irresistible power ; those wells or pits which

the police have been compelled to close, because men threw themselves into them; those trees which had been cut down because they inspired men with the idea of hanging themselves; that contagion of suicides, of robberies, of murders, at certain epochs, by desperate means; that strange and subtle enticement of example, which makes you yawn because another yawns, suffer because you see another suffer, kill yourself because you see others kill themselves—and my hair stood up with horror.

How could this Fledermaus, this base, sordid creature, have derived so profound a law of human nature? How had she found the means to use this law to the profit or indulgence of her sanguinary instincts? This I could not comprehend; it surpassed my wildest imaginations.

But, reflecting longer upon this inexplicable mystery, I resolved to turn the fatal law against her, and to draw the old murderess into her own net.

So many innocent victims called out for vengeance!

I felt myself to be on the right path.

I went to all the old-clothes sellers in Nuremberg, and returned in the afternoon to the Fat Ox with an enormous packet under my arm.

Nichel Schmidt had known me for a long time; his wife was fat and good-looking; I had painted her portrait.

"Ah, Master Christian," said he, squeezing my hand, "what happy circumstance brings you here? What procures me the pleasure of seeing you?"

"My dear Herr Schmidt, I feel a vehement, an insatiable desire to sleep in the Green Room of your inn."

We were standing on the threshold of the inn, and I pointed to the room. The good man looked at me distrustfully.

"Fear nothing," I said. "I have no desire to hang myself."

"All in good time—all in good time! For, frankly, that would give me pain—an artist of such merit! When do you wish the room, Master Christian?"

"This evening."

"Impossible—it is occupied."

"The gentleman can enter immediately," said a voice just behind me. "I will not be in the way!"

We turned around in great surprise. The peasant of Nassau stood before us, with his three-cornered hat, and his packet at the end of his walking-stick. He had just learned the history of his three predecessors in the Green Room, and was trembling with rage.

"Rooms like yours!" cried he, stuttering; "but it is murderous to put people there—it is assassination! You deserve to be sent to the galleys immediately!"

"Go—go—calm yourself," said the innkeeper; "that did not prevent you from sleeping well."

"Happily, I said my prayers at night," said the peasant; "without that, where would I be?" and he withdrew, with his hands raised to heaven.

"Well," said Nichel Schmidt, stupefied, "the room is vacant; but, I entreat you, do not serve me a bad trick."

"It would be a worse trick for myself than for you, sir."

I gave my packet to the servants, and installed myself for the time with the drinkers. For a long time I had not felt so calm and so happy. After so many doubts and disquietudes, I touched the goal. The horizon seemed to clear up, and it appeared that some invisible power gave me the hand. I lighted my pipe, placed my elbow on the table, my wine before me, and listened to the chorus in "*Freischütz*," played by a troupe of gypsies from the Black Forest. The trumpets, the hue and cry of the chase, the hautboys, plunged me into a vague reverie; and at times, rousing up to look at the hour, I asked myself, gravely, if all which had happened to me was not a dream. But the watchman came to ask us to leave the *salle*, and soon other and more solemn thoughts were surging in my soul, and, in deep meditation, I followed little Charlotte, who preceded me with a candle to my room.

We mounted the stairs to the third story. Charlotte gave me the candle, and pointed to the door.

“There,” said she, and descended rapidly.

I opened the door. The Green Room was like any other inn room. The ceiling was very low, the bed very high. With one glance I explored the interior, and then glided to the window.

Nothing was to be seen in the house of Fledermaus ; only, in some distant room, an obscure light was burning. Some one there was on the watch.

“That is well,” said I, closing the curtain ;
“I have all necessary time.”

I opened my packet. I put on a woman’s bonnet with hanging lace ; then, placing myself before a mirror, I took a brush and painted wrinkles in my face. This took me nearly an hour. Then I put on the dress and a large shawl, and I was actually afraid of myself. Fledermaus seemed to me to look at me from the mirror.

At this moment the watchman cried out, “Eleven o’clock !” I seized the manikin which I had brought in my packet, and muffled it in a costume precisely similar to that worn by the old wretch. I then opened the curtain.

Certainly, after all that I had seen of the Fledermaus, of her infernal cunning, her prudence, her adroitness, she could not in any way surprise me ; and yet I was afraid. The light which I had

remarked in the chamber was still immovable, and now cast its yellow rays on the manikin of the peasant of Nassau, which was crouched on the corner of the bed, with the head hanging on the breast, the three-cornered hat pulled down over the face, the arms suspended, and the whole aspect that of absolute despair.

The shadows, managed with diabolical art, allowed nothing to be seen but the general effect of the face. The red vest and six round buttons alone seemed to shine out in the darkness. But the silence of the night, the complete immobility of the figure, the exhausted, mournful air, were well calculated to take possession of a spectator with a strange power. For myself, although forewarned, I was chilled even to my bones.

How would it, then, have fared with the poor simple peasant, if he had been surprised unawares? He would have been utterly cast down. Despairing, he would have lost all power of self-control, and the spirit of imitation would have done the rest.

Scarcely had I moved the curtain when I saw Fledermaus on the watch behind her window. She could not see me. I opened my window softly; the window opposite was opened. Then her manikin appeared to rise slowly and advance before me. I also advanced my manikin, and, seizing my torch with one hand, with the other I quickly opened the shutters. And now the old

woman and myself were face to face. Struck with sudden terror, she had let her manikin fall.

We gazed at each other with almost equal horror. *She* extended her finger—I advanced *mine*. *She* moved her lips—I agitated *mine*. She breathed a profound sigh, and leaned upon her elbow. I imitated her.

To describe all the terrors of this scene would be impossible. It bordered upon confusion, madness, delirium. It was a death-struggle between two wills, between two intelligences, between two souls—each one wishing to destroy the other; and, in this struggle, I had the advantage—her victims struggled with me.

After having imitated for some seconds every movement of Fledermaus, I pulled a rope from under my shirt, and attached it to the cross-beam.

The old woman gazed at me with gaping mouth. I passed the rope around my neck: her pupils expanded, lightened; her face was convulsed.

“No, no!” said she, in a whistling voice.

I pursued her with the impassibility of an executioner.

Then rage seemed to take possession of her.

“Old fool!” she exclaimed, straightening herself up, and her hands contracted on the cross-beam. “Old fool!” I gave her no time to go on. Blowing out my lamp, I stooped, like

a man about to make a vigorous spring, and, seizing my manikin, I passed the rope around its neck, and precipitated it below.

A terrible cry resounded through the street, and then silence, which I seemed to feel. Perspiration bathed my forehead. I listened a long time. At the end of a quarter of an hour I heard, far away, very far away, the voice of the watchman, crying, "Inhabitants of Nuremberg, midnight—midnight sounds!"

"Now justice is satisfied," I cried; "the three victims are avenged. Pardon me, O Lord!"

About five minutes after the cry of the watchman, I saw Fledermaus, attracted, allured by my manikin (her exact image), spring from the window, with a rope around her neck, and rest suspended from the cross-beam.

I saw the shudder of death undulating through her body, while the moon, calm, silent, majestic, inundated the summit of the roof, and her cold, pale rays reposed upon the old, disheveled, hideous head.

Just as I had seen the poor young student of Heidelberg, just so did I now see Fledermaus.

In the morning all Nuremberg learned that the old wretch had hung herself, and this was the last event of the kind in the street Minnesänger.

THE WONDERFUL GLASS.

TIME past, I knew a good-natured druggist at Mentz, named Hans Schnapps. The door of his laboratory opened on the Thiermarkt ; it was surmounted by a coat of arms in the place of a sign. Mercury's wand and the serpent of *Æsculapius* ornamented the panels. As for Hans, instead of remaining in his shop, he promenaded the streets with a big spy-glass under his arm, leaving the dispensing of his drugs to two young men, his clerks.

Hans was an original, and his appearance peculiar. His nose was long, his eyes were gray, and his lips always wore a half-sneering smile. From his broad-brimmed felt hat, his reddish drugget cloak, and his beard trimmed to a point, he might easily have been taken for a Flemish artist.

I used to meet him occasionally at the tavern

of the "Tobacco Pot," when we would usually play a game of cards or dominoes, and talk of the times and the weather. Schnapps saw no necessity for telling me his business, and I saw no reason for telling him mine ; in fact, we cared little what the other did or how he got a livelihood.

One day the burgomaster Zacharias said to me :

"Dr. Benedum, you are often seen with one Hans Schnapps."

"Yes, we meet occasionally ; of late, quite frequently, in fact."

"Schnapps is a fool."

"Ah ! I hadn't discovered it."

"Nothing more certain. Instead of attending to his business, he does nothing but walk the streets with a big spy-glass under his arm, wasting his time and losing his customers."

"That's possible ; but it does not concern me."

"Very true. If he only were not married, and no one suffered by his neglect to look after his business but himself—"

"Ah, is he married ?"

"His wife is the daughter of one of our most worthy citizens, a well-to-do cloth merchant."

"Good for Schnapps ! His wife will have a little fortune, then, one of these days."

"Which he will squander."

"On spy-glasses ?"

“No, with his foolish experiments. Do you know, Doctor, that when he is not out squandering away his time, he is in his basement making Heaven knows what? If you accidentally glance in at the window, you see his spy-glass leveled at you; Schnapps looks at you and bursts out laughing; and when the dinner hour comes his wife is obliged to call out three or four times, ‘Hans! Hans! the soup is ready.’”

“Poor woman! she is much to be pitied.”

The burgomaster, it was clear, half suspected that I was disposed to amuse myself at his expense; but he pretended not to notice it, and proposed that we should play for a pot of beer. I accepted, and we chatted of other things.

These revelations excited my curiosity. What in the world could Schnapps be at in his basement? What was the meaning of his having his spy-glass turned toward the window? Was it simply nonsense, or was it a serious experiment? These questions were continually in my mind, and I felt that I should have no peace until I satisfied my curiosity. I therefore went to the pharmacy the following morning, to see what I could discover. It was about nine o'clock. Frau Schnapps, a little, nervous, dull-eyed, badly dressed woman—one of those people who, without really uttering a complaint, find means to proclaim their martyrdom—Frau Schnapps received me behind the counter.

“Good morning, madam,” said I, bowing low, and raising my hat most deferentially. “Will you be so kind as to tell me where I can find Herr Schnapps?”

“In the basement,” she replied, with a significant smile.

“Already?”

There was something in my “already” that seemed to amuse the little lady. She intimated that I should take the door to the left.

I hastened to feel my way through the passage and down the dark stairs, and, without meeting with any serious mishap, though I stumbled two or three times, soon found myself on the flagstones of the Schnapps laboratory.

It was spacious and perfectly dry. On looking around, I discovered that it was encumbered with gigantic spy-glasses, with mirrors of every conceivable size and shape, and lenses and prisms innumerable—in short, with all the paraphernalia of an optician.

Schnapps turned, quite surprised to see me enter.

“Ho!” said he, “it is my good friend Dr. Benedum. Glad to see you—very glad!”

He came toward me with open arms, but I stopped him with a tragic gesture, and cried:

“Stop! First know the object of my visit. I come, on behalf of our worthy burgomaster, to feel your pulse.”

He reached out his arm, and I placed my fingers on the artery. After a moment's pause, I remarked, with becoming gravity :

“Hum ! you are not so ill as they say.”

“Eh—what ! Ill—I ?”

“No, you can not be said to really have a disease of the mind.”

My reply made the druggist laugh so heartily that Frau Schnapps looked down from the top of the stairs to discover the cause of her husband's good humor.

“Sophia ! Sophia !” cried Schnapps. “Ha, ha, ha ! What do you think they say of me ? Ha, ha, ha ! They say I'm crazy !”

This burst was quite sufficient to satisfy Frau Schnapps's curiosity. With a sneer and a shrug, which might easily have been taken for an intimation that she thought people were not far in the wrong, she disappeared,

“Be seated, my dear Doctor,” said Hans, having become comparatively calm ; “be seated. Ha, ha, ha ! I don't know when I've laughed so heartily. But tell me to what I am really indebted for the honor of your visit.”

He brought forward an arm-chair for me, while he found a seat for himself on a low stool, where, with his grasshopper legs wide apart, and his elbows on his knees, as he sat stroking his pointed beard with his long, thin fingers, he presented a strangely unique appearance.

I told him of my conversation the day before with the burgomaster, and Schnapps, instead of being incensed, indulged in another hearty laugh.

“The ungrateful, burgomasterian donkey!” said he; “that’s the way he speaks of me, is it? when I am expending my days and nights and the energies of my genius in his interest; when I have just invented a syringe for the special benefit of his class—a superb, a magnificent discovery, Doctor. Ha, ha, ha! Look at this glass. It is the famous Schnapps syringe—the only instrument of its kind that has ever been thought of, much less constructed. Till now we have only had the means of refreshing and purifying the abdominal viscera. Well, sir, I, with my syringe, propose to refresh and purify the brains of all the idiots, the imbeciles and fools, official and non-official, whom I can persuade to subject themselves to treatment. I pour into the cylinder of the instrument you have in your hand a decoction of Voltaire, of Shakespeare, of Father Malebranche, or of some one else, according to circumstances; I introduce the small end delicately into the eye; I push, and, crack! my subject is a poet, a metaphysician, or simply a man of common sense, according to the decoction used.”

Here Schnapps indulged in such a series of contortions, threw himself about to such an extent, that I expected to see him fall from his stool; but, fortunately, he preserved his equilibrium.

“A very clever bit of pleasantry,” said I.

“Pleasantry !” cried Schnapps ; “pleasantry ! Nothing of the sort. You have too much sense, my dear Doctor, not to know that our opinions depend upon our point of view. The poor wretch in his rags, without house or home, sees things in an entirely different light from that in which the nabob sees them. In his judgment, society is constituted on a false basis, and the laws are absurd.”

“Without doubt, but—”

“But,” interrupted Schnapps, “seat the fellow at a well-supplied table, in a spacious mansion, surrounded by handsome grounds, and peopled with pretty women ; feed him on carefully prepared dishes, quench his thirst with Johannisberg, and place behind his chair a half dozen lackeys, who address him as ‘Sir,’ or ‘My Lord,’ or ‘Your Grace,’ or what you will ; and you will find that his notion of things will undergo as great a change as his condition has done. Then, in his judgment, everything will be quite as it should be ; then, according to him, our social demarkations are the outcome of perfectly natural causes ; then our laws appear to him as the master products of the human mind.”

“Very true, my dear Schnapps—very true. What you say is the burden of one of the most familiar chapters in the history of humanity. We see the things of this world through a convex or

a concave glass, according to the position in which we are placed. But I fail, as yet, to see your drift."

"Oh," cried Schnapps, "what I am driving at is very simple. Since everything depends upon our point of view, it is clear that happiness will be assured by our being able to see the things of this world in their most favorable light; and it is precisely herein that consists the inestimable merit of my discovery. You shall judge for yourself. Here, look into the instrument you have in your hand."

I did as he bade me, and could not withhold a cry of amazement and admiration. I saw myself president of the Society of Scientists of Berlin, tall and commanding in figure, and decorated with the Orders of Merit, of the Black Eagle, of the Brown Eagle, of the Red Eagle, of the Garter, and I don't know what all. I held the gavel, and called the members to order. Through the windows of the amphitheatre I saw my carriage and horses, and my lackeys in their rich liveries. Farther on I saw my wife, beautiful as the day, walking alone and pensive under the limes; and I said to myself:

"Benedum! Benedum! fortunate Benedum! what a sublime genius, what a great man thou art!"

An outburst of ironic laughter aroused me from this profound contemplation. I removed

the apparatus from before my eyes, and saw myself again in the basement, standing before the apothecary, who looked at me with a peculiar expression that seemed to me little short of malicious.

"Eh, well," said he ; " what do you say to that ? "

" My dear Schnapps," I cried, " you must let me have this glass."

" What ! let you have it ! " said he. " Do you know that this little thing cost me ten years of hard work and study ; that with it I, in some sort, am the possessor of the universe ; that I see my wife always young, pretty, and fascinating ; that I am always cheerful and content ; that with it I do not envy the proudest monarchs of the earth ; that it renders me as rich as Croesus and more powerful than Xerxes, and that I would not part with it for anything the world has to offer ? Nor is that all : with this little instrument I can give to myself clysters of metaphysics, of poesy, or of common sense, according to my desires and needs."

" But tell me, I beg of you," I cried, " how you chanced to make this sublime discovery."

" It is not so marvelous as you seem to think it," said he, laughing. " It is simply a kaleidoscope, but a kaleidoscope of a new kind. Instead of letting its flowers and pieces of colored glass fall where accident takes them, it places them in

a certain natural, sequent order. In other words, you see here a union of the daguerreotype and the telescope, two instruments that the Creator has united in the head of man."

Here Schnapps brought from the depth of one of his pockets a shell snuff-box. After slowly inhaling a pinch of its contents, seemingly to assist him in collecting and arranging his thoughts, he continued :

"Three years ago I endeavored to fix the solar spectrum on a copper plate. To this end I employed all the chemical combinations imaginable, without obtaining any satisfactory result. One day, with my plate coated with a more sensitive composition than any I had thus far used, I seemed to fix the red, orange, and violet rays ; the plate assumed something of the colors of the rainbow. I was, as you can readily conceive, delighted, thinking that at last I was on the road to success, when my wife, in accordance with her immemorial custom, began to cry out :

" 'Hans, the soup is getting cold ! Hans, the soup is getting cold ! Hans, Hans, Hans, Hans, Hans, Hans ! the soup is getting cold !—the soup is getting cold !'

"Such cries the devil himself could not withstand. I was compelled, whether I would or not, to interrupt my experiments. I placed my copper plate on the projection of the wall you see there, which usually serves as a place to put my candle,

and went quietly up and seated myself at the table."

"And what did you say to your wife?"

"Nothing."

"In your place, I should have wrung her neck."

Schnapps smiled incredulously.

"That night," he continued, "after supper, I came down here, as I was in the habit of doing. Fatigue and the annoyances I had had during the day prevented my returning to my work. I sat down in this arm-chair, and soon fell asleep. When I awoke, about one o'clock in the morning, I found that my candle had burned out; but the light from a star entered at this little window, and, striking the plate, was reflected directly toward me. With my eyes involuntarily fixed on this luminous point, I got to thinking of my wife; of some of her disagreeable ways, and that I should be justified in endeavoring to correct them; and, in short, of the thousand little annoyances that I find myself daily subjected to. Finally, tired of these reflections, I fell asleep again. The next morning all was forgotten, when, glancing at the plate, I saw—what think you?—my dream of the night imprinted on it with striking fidelity: my wife, the dining-room, the clock on the mantel, the windows in the rear, the little yard beyond—in fact, everything in the room and connected with it, to the smallest details.

“You can imagine my surprise and delight. It was then that I conceived the idea of my kaleidoscope. I saw that the human brain, like the eye of the fly, is an optical instrument with innumerable facets ; that its products are delivered by refraction, and may be gathered on a chemical substance, the composition of which I had just discovered.

“Thus, my dear Doctor, all your thoughts and desires, in this instrument, are materialized ; with its aid, you can convey your wishes and conceptions more rapidly and more perfectly than language could possibly convey them.”

This discovery seemed to me truly miraculous.

“My dear Schnapps, you’re a wonderful man !” I cried. “Allow me to embrace you. You are greater than the Pyramid of Cheops ; you will have a place in the eternal temple of fame, where you will shine like a star of the first magnitude. But I beg that you will enlighten me on this point : how can you administer clysters compounded of philosophy, science, poesy, or reason ? This appears to me to be even more wonderful than the materialization of thought.”

“First, let me call your attention to certain general considerations of paramount interest,” said Schnapps, visibly flattered by my enthusiasm. “You must have remarked that the great philosophers, the great mathematicians, the great poets,

and, in general, the great *idealogues*, end their days in misery. Abused and scoffed at during their lives, and sometimes even hunted down like wild beasts, they become after their death the prey of a certain class of individuals known as *practical men*. Much has been said and written, time out of mind, against this *exploitation* of genius by mediocrity, but that has not prevented the practice from being as common now as it was in the days of Homer, of Pythagoras, of Socrates, and of so many other celebrated idealogues. They are persecuted and killed, in order that reputations may be made and money coined out of their discoveries. That all this is wrong, quite other than it should be, is obvious; but at the bottom nothing is more simple, and, I will venture to add, more natural. In order that an idea may succeed in this world, it is necessary that it have the support of the masses. But the masses, who would not be able to rise to the level of the idea pure and simple, comprehend it easily and perfectly when it is materialized—that is, they comprehend the fact. The supposed superiority of your practical men over your idealogues is due to their greater skill in effecting this materialization. These fellows are rich and powerful; they govern the world; it is to them that monuments are erected. Why? Because they place within the comprehension of the idiots and imbeciles the ideas of some poor devil of a truly great man, who

died of hunger in a garret. Am I right, or am I not ?”

“You are right, quite right, Herr Schnapps.”

“Very well,” resumed Schnapps, with an ironical smile, “my kaleidoscope suppresses all this practical presumption, and places genuine merit where it rightfully belongs. It materializes ideas, and places them within easy reach of the masses. Suppose, for example, I want to add to my knowledge of metaphysics. I place my eye at the small end here, and you read to me Kant. As his reasoning enters my brain, passes through it and out at my eye, it is imprinted indelibly on this plate ; it then becomes materialized, becomes tangible, becomes something that my senses can take cognizance of, and, consequently, something that I can comprehend and appreciate.”

While Schnapps explained this grand mystery to me, an irresistible desire to have his kaleidoscope took possession of me.

“My dear Schnapps,” said I, “I trust you will make a number of these instruments. Such a discovery belongs to humanity.”

“Humanity be hanged !” cried Schnapps. “I should like to know what humanity has ever done for me. It treats me as though I were a fool, a madman ; it binds me to a woman whom I dislike, and it would let me die of hunger, like all the other great discoverers, if I had not my drug-shop to fall back on.”

"But you will rise in public consideration ; you will secure universal esteem and admiration."

"Eh ! what do I want of the admiration of a crowd of dunderheads ?" cried Schnapps. "Take from them the discoveries of Gutenberg, of Galileo, of Newton, of Volta, of Daguerre, and of Hans Schnapps, and you will have only a troupe of asses kneeling before a saber. The admiration of people of that sort ! No, thank you. Let humanity make its own kaleidoscopes ; as for me, I shall hold on to mine, and I shall use it for my own edification and advantage."

This exhibition of egotism exasperated me.

"But, my dear Schnapps," said I, controlling my anger, "allow me to observe that your reasoning is absurd. True, you make sublime kaleidoscopes ; but others cultivate the ground, sow, reap, have their corn ground for you, and even bring you the bread ready made ; others erect pharmacies ; others make your clothes and shoes ; others procure wine, beer, and tobacco for you—things you can not well do without. We are all dependent the one upon the other, my dear Schnapps, and when—"

While I was, as I thought, making myself most eloquent after this fashion, the apothecary leveled his wonderful glass at me.

"Ah, ha !" he suddenly cried, interrupting me, "I see what you are after. Devilish little do

you care for humanity. You want my glass, but you'll not get it. Ha, ha, ha !”

And he hastened to reduce it to its smallest compass, and put it into a box, of which he turned the key. Then, turning to me with a triumphant air, he continued :

“ You'll not stick your nose near it again. Let that be a lesson to you—let it teach you not to play the hypocrite, and preach philanthropy in your own individual interest. I see you, like a good many more I have met, are an oily fellow, Dr. Benedum. You a philanthropist ! you preach duty to me ! I don't like such people as you are, sir, and you can in no way oblige me so much as by retracing the steps that brought you here.”

My face had crimsoned to the very roots of my hair. I felt a strong desire to give Schnapps a drubbing then and there ; but I suddenly remembered that his two apprentices were a couple of brawny fellows, either of whom would be a match for me, and prudently retired.

Soon afterward I left Mentz, to establish myself at Nuremberg, and it is now nearly two years since Schnapps and I last met. It seems, however, that he continues to promenade the streets in his red drugget cloak, with what is generally supposed to be a spy-glass under his arm. At least, that is what the burgomaster Zacharias writes me.

What a pity that such a valuable secret should be in the hands of such a crazy idiot !

It is a singular fact that men of common sense have never invented anything ; it is the fools who, till now, have made all the great discoveries.

THE END.

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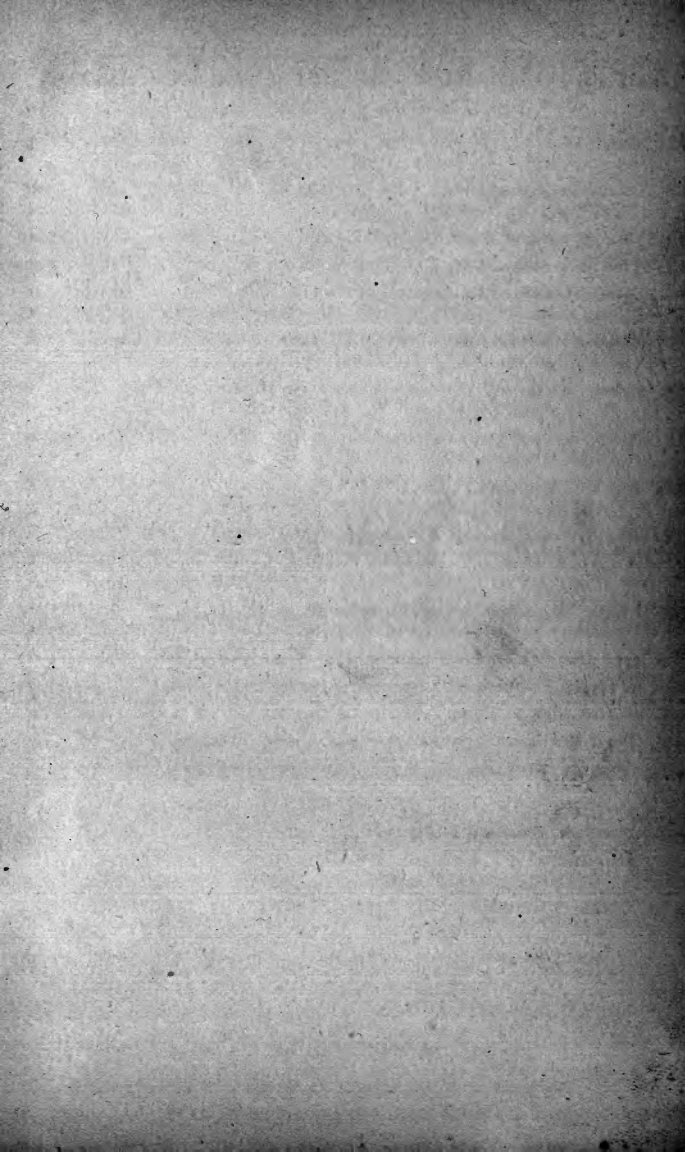
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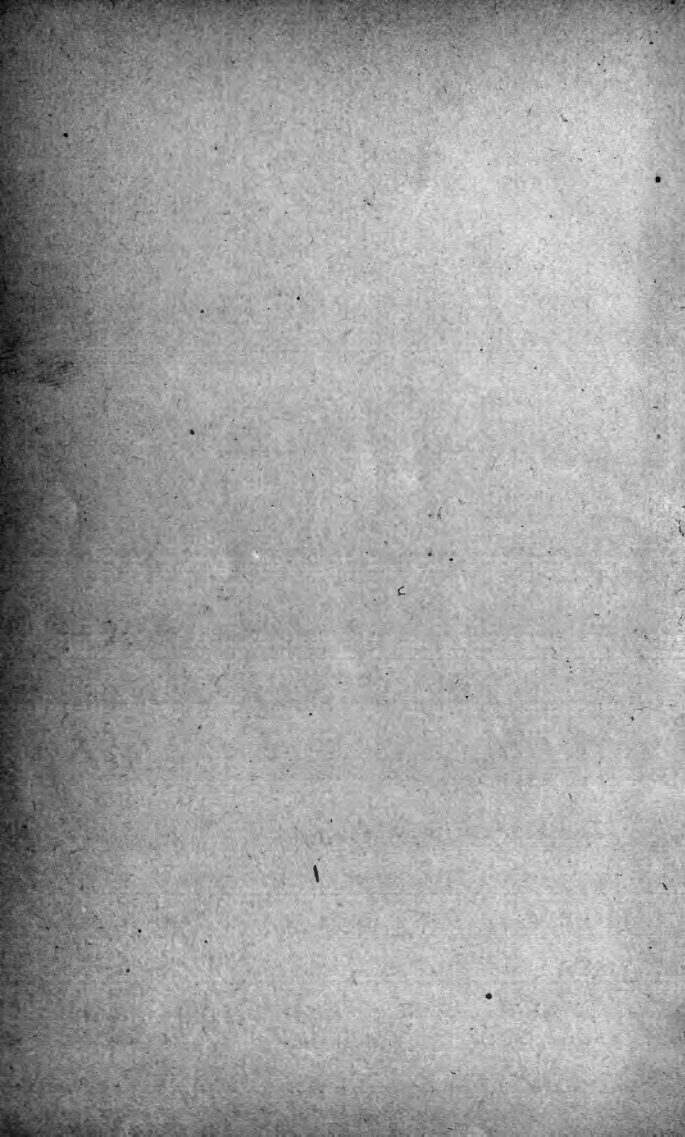
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